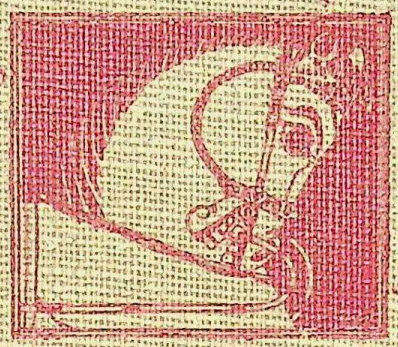
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



RI
1/57

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

759.954

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

MANU THACKER MEMORIAL VOLUME

PRESENT-DAY PAINTERS OF INDIA

PROVINCIAL MUSEUM,
LIBRARY, LUCKNOW.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

BOOKS BY G. VENKATACHALAM

Modern Indian Artists

The Mirror of Indian Art

The Travel Diary of an Art Student

The Daughters of the Dawn

Pen-pictures and Sketches

Fragrant Memories

Shanta and Her Art

Contemporary Indian Painters

Dance in India

Forever India

Profiles

Hebbar and His Paintings

The Moods of a Mahatma

Rupadarsini

The Perfumed Orient (in press)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

PRESENT-DAY PAINTERS OF INDIA

MANU THACKER

G. VENKATACHALAM

Printed by S. Rámu, at the Commercial Printing Press 105, Cowasji Patel Street, Fort, Bombay and published by Sudhangshu Publications, Shantaram Lane, Malabar Hill, Bombay.

PROVINCIAL MUSEUM,
LIBRARY, LUCKNOW.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

To

MALINI

who shared our enthusiasm for

Indian art and artists.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

FOREWORD

THIS book is the result of an inspiration, a wish and a fulfilment. The inspiration was Michael Brown's, who conceived the idea of publishing a series of short sketches on modern Indian painters in his paper, the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, and thus broadcast their lives and works to a wider world. He did his part nobly and well.

The wish was Manu Thacker's, who helped to collect the materials and later wanted to bring them out in book form for use in schools and libraries. In this he sought my co-operation and wanted such to be a joint effort, but fate willed it otherwise; his death dealt a cruel blow to such hopes and plans.

The fulfilment was left to me. Manu and I had talked about it together, when he was alive, planned it together, enthused ourselves over it together, and it was my solemn duty to carry out his wishes. And I could not have accomplished this without the support and co-operation of his parents and wife, who were his ardent admirers in all his altruistic works.

The co-operation of the artists concerned was equally essential, and that came forth in an abundant measure, voluntarily and spontaneously—to all of whom, my sincere thanks. It is no easy job, the reproduction in colours from the originals, especially in a country like ours where technical equipment is still in an undeveloped state; and I must ask the forgiveness of the artists for any shortcomings in this direction. The printers have done their best.

And lastly I wish to thank all the artists who so readily and kindly either lent their original paintings or their blocks for illustrating the book. My special thanks are due to Babuji Herur, one of the most gifted of our young painters in the traditional style, for the colourful design on the dust cover; and to the Bombay Art Society for so kindly and willingly placing at my disposal a number of blocks for use in this book.

The chapters are arranged according to the alphabetical order of their names to avoid any possible misunderstanding. I wish to thank Vajubhai Bhagat, and Malini Ben for their hearty co-operation, and Sri S. Ramu, General Manager of the Commercial Printing Press of the Tatas, for his personal interest in the production of the volume.

G. V.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CONTENTS

(PART ONE)

		PAGE
1.	Jagannath Ahivasi	1
2.	Syed Ahmed	4
3.	N. S. Bendre	7
4.	Vajubhai Bhagat	13
5.	Shiavax Chavda	17
6.	Ishwar Dass	21
7.	Rabindra Dutt	24
8.	K. K. Hebbar	27
9.	Manohara Joshi	31
10.	Ravishankar Raval	34
11.	S. H. Raza	39
12.	Morarji Sampat	42
13.	Madhukar Seth	47
14.	Yagnesh Shukla	51
15.	Bhanu Smart	55

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CONTENTS

(PART TWO)

		PAGE
1.	Manishi Dey	60
2.	Pulin Behari Dutt	65
3.	Dhiren Gandhi	68
4.	Gopal Ghosh	71
5.	Abhay Khatau	74
6.	Prannath Mago	79
7.	Kshitin Mazumdar	82
8.	Pratima Devi	85
9.	Jamini Roy	88
10.	Bhabesh Sanyal	92
11.	Lalit Mohan Sen	94
12.	Amrita Sher Gil	98
13.	Y. G. Srimati	104
14.	A. D. Thomas	107

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(PART ONE)

		Facing Page
1. Ahivasi: *Message*	(*Courtesy: Bombay Art Society*)	1
2. Ahmed: *Bull Fight (Ajanta)*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	4
3. Bendre: *Toilet*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	7
4. Bhagat: *Fisherwoman*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	13
5. Chavda: *Varli Women*	(*Courtesy: Bombay Art Society*)	17
6. Ishwar Dass: *Flame*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	21
7. Rabindra Dutt: *Harvest*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	24
8. K. K. Hebbar: *Maidenhood*	(*Courtesy: Bombay Art Society*)	27
9. Manohar Joshi: *Unloading*	(*Courtesy: Bombay Art Society*)	31
10. Raval: Sri *Hemchandrasuri*	(*Courtesy: Kumar Karyalaya*)	34
11. Raza: *Bombay View*	(*Courtesy: Bombay Art Society*)	39
12. Sampat: *Sringar*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	42
13. Seth: *Mother*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	47
14. Shukla: *Toilet*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	51
15. Bhanu Smart: *Nag Panchami*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	55

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

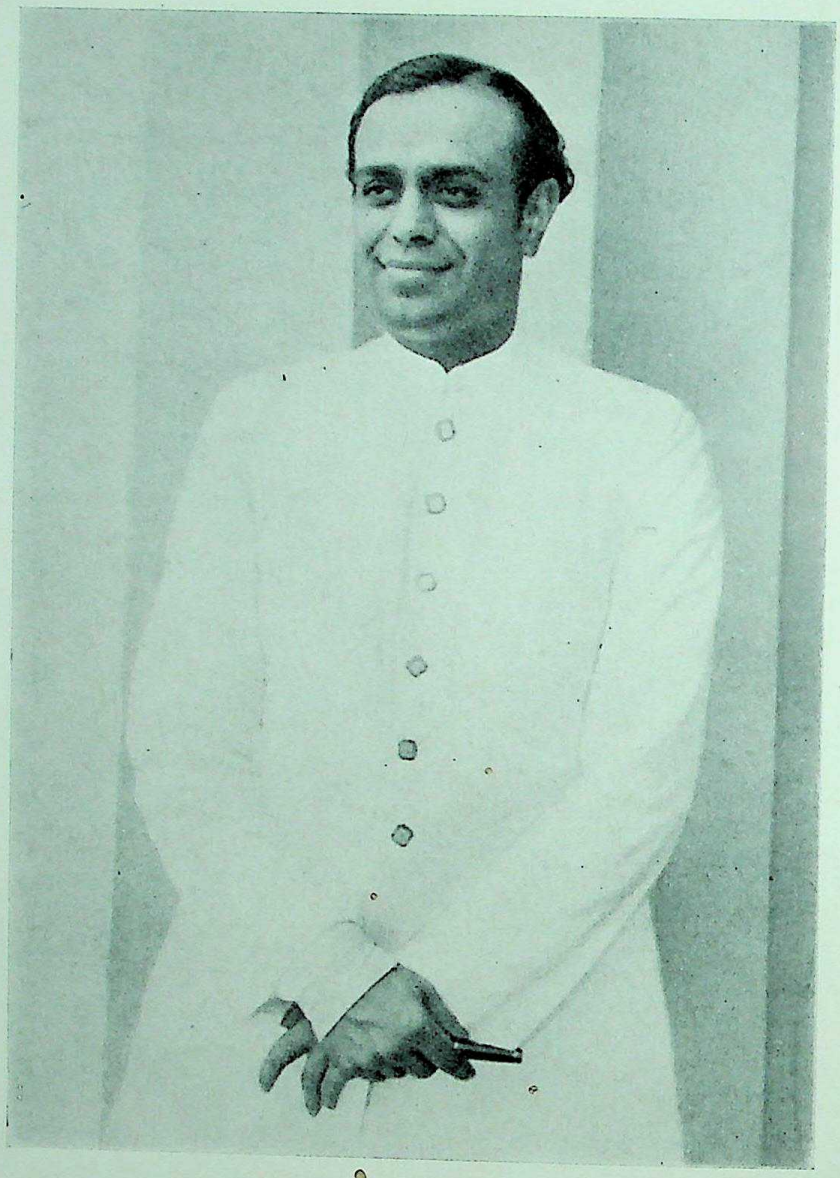
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(PART TWO)

		Facing Page
1. Manishi Dey: *Reverie*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	61
2. Dutt: *Buddha*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	66
3. Gandhi: *Rajgir*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	69
4. Gosh: *After Bath*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	72
5. Khatau: *Indian Ballet*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	75
6. Mago: *Drummers*	(*Courtesy: Bombay Art Society*)	80
7. Mazumdar: *Jamuna*	(*Courtesy: I.S.O.A.*)	83
8. Protima Devi: *Compassion*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	86
9. Jamini Roy: *Madonna and Child*	(*Courtesy: Marg*)	89
10. Sanyal: *Untouchable Girl*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	93
11. Sen: Krishna Leela (*After South Indian Sculpture*)	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	95
12. Amrita Sher Gil: *Story Teller*	(*Courtesy: Y.A.C.C.*)	99
13. Srimati: *Andal*	(*Courtesy: Artist*)	100
14. A. D. Thomas: *Harijan*	(*Courtesy: Mysore Chitrashala*)	109

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Manu Thacker

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

IN MEMORIUM

THIS is a memorial volume. It is to the memory of a young man who was a true friend of the artists. He was Mansinha Moolji, better known to artists and to the art world in India as Manu Thacker. He was barely thirty two when death snatched him away from the midst of his activities and before he could finish dreaming his dreams. His death was a cruel blow not only to his family but to his many friends, who were mostly artists and art lovers. Though born in affluent circumstances and of a Bhatia family, his absorbing interests were art and artists and his sympathies were with the needy and the underdog. His interests in art and artists were not remote and academical but were intensely practical, and his services were as genuine and sincere as they were substantial.

His interests were many and varied but art was his absorbing passion. Not that he was very learned in art matters or that he was a keen student of any one particular branch of the arts; much less a specialist. He left that to the critics and connoiseurs. He was essentially an artist, who would have achieved something had he taken to it seriously, but he deliberately chose to be a humanist who could help, in however a humble way, art and artists to fulfil their *dharma*. He dreamt and worked towards that realisation.

What he actually did for art and artists was far less than what he had desired, planned and hoped to achieve in his life time. He was always full of big ideas and utopian schemes. He wanted to do so much; and he worked himself to death to amass a small fortune for the fulfilment of his ambitions. Among his unfulfilled dreams were not only ideal art institutions and art galleries but summer resorts and holiday homes for poor and struggling artists, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or sex.

He knew the day-to-day struggles of living artists in India, as he was one of the very few who really helped them with a willing heart and an open purse, and he refused to see anything great or good in a society or country where poets, painters and singers were made

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

to starve and live in hovels like some dumb driven cattle. To him the creators of beauty and inspirers of life were god-sent men and they should be honoured as the first citizens of the land. He had great contempt for politicians and other parasites who fed themselves on the fat of the land.

Manu Thacker was by no means an intellectual rebel; he was a rebel at heart. He wept over the sad affairs of the world, especially of the art world, more than he criticised. Wise for his age, he saw the remedy for the ills of the world not in political or economic paneceas but in changing the "thinking animal", which is man, into a human soul with feelings, where are the roots of nobility, goodness and beauty. He revealed this metamorphosis in his own life, and not by talk but by action.

The kindly acts and daily services that he has rendered to artists are many, the least of them being his passion for giving publicity to artists, known and unknown. He believed in such propaganda methods and never spared either himself or others. No artist who went to him for sympathy or help ever returned disappointed or empty-handed. His was no lip sympathy or hypocritical praise, as is the case with the majority of people who profess to understand art and to love artists.

He was always on the look-out for patrons for poor painters, even if they be second rate artists, and when he failed, he himself bought their works just to help them. It did not matter to him if the paintings were worth buying or worth the price; the needs of the artists were more important to him than their merits. His rooms were full of such works of art. The public at large knew him only as a critic through his writings but he was more than that; he was a generous patron.

His contributions on modern Indian painters in the pages of the *Illustrated Weekly* are well known. It was a labour of love for him; the kind and sympathetic editor of the *Illustrated Weekly* can testify to this, as he had heartily co-operated in this venture. It was a common sight to see Manu Thacker arriving at the Times of India office, periodically, with a stack of paintings under his arm, good, bad

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

and indifferent, sitting with the editor, Michael Brown, sorting them out, discussing their merits and even cajoling the editor to get some of them accepted just to help the artists.

The series, *Painters of the Present*, which appeared regularly in the *Illustrated Weekly*, were the joint efforts of Michael Brown, Manu Thacker and the present writer. It was his wish that these sketches should be collected together and put in book form with suitable reproductions so that the fugitive essays might have a more permanent garb and serve a larger public.

These sketches are in no way complete; they are not criticisms, learned or otherwise, on the works of some of the contemporary painters, nor are they even brief biographical studies. They are certainly not literary efforts. They were written with a limited knowledge of the artists and their works and with meagre materials supplied; their main purpose was to introduce to a larger public some of the foremost and rising painters in India, whose works may have been seen but of whom little is known.

Manu Thacker's life is briefly told: The eldest son of Seth Moolji Dayal and Srimati Babi Ben, (the father a mill-owner and the mother a well-known social worker), Manu was born at Bombay in 1918.

His early education was at the New Era School, Bombay, where he studied painting under Rabindra Dutt. He went to Ceylon for his Cambridge University course, where he was very popular both as student and as a dance-artist. He knew a bit of dancing, as a boy, and was eager to give expression to the aesthetic side of his nature. It was there I met him, sixteen years ago, and my own enthusiasm for art and artists enkindled in him the desire to serve them. It was a lucky meeting for both of us.

Returning to Bombay, he plunged himself, heart and soul, into the art movements there. He joined every art organisation in the city, enthused himself over every kind of art activity, whipped the committees into action and made himself felt whether people liked or not. He was a live wire and his enthusiasm was contagious. There was no art function in the city of Bombay where his genial presence was not felt and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

where he welcomed all and sundry with his broad smiles and warm grips. He was an institution in himself.

It was to Manu Thacker Bombay owed its recent fillip in art activities and their revitalisation in all directions. He never spared either time or money to make Bombay more art conscious and to take its place in the vanguard of the cultural life of India. It was mainly due to his efforts that the All India Association of Fine Arts, a federating central body of art organisations in the country, came into being, and for which he fought and strove at three successive All-India art conferences in Delhi and Bombay. He became somewhat unpopular with a small section of vested interests and all unconsciously aroused petty jealousy among small-minded men. But he succeeded.

Manu was a lovable character and to know him was to love him. He was a kind hearted man, a genial host, a good friend and a gentleman. He never did a mean thing; he was generous to a fault. An amateur artist himself, he appreciated all good efforts and was never hypercritical or supercilious in his views on art or art criticisms. He tried to be all things to all men and had an understanding nature. He lived a good life; surrounded himself with books and pictures; had a happy home with a devoted wife, a gifted daughter, loving sisters and brothers and adoring parents. He was lucky in worldly goods and as a businessman was remarkably shrewd and successful.

But art was his first and last passion. Even in his sick bed he talked only about art and artists. Of robust constitution, seemingly strong and healthy, with a massive head and a big round face, lit by two dark kindly eyes; broad shoulders built on a generous chasis, and intensely active all through the waking hours, none suspected that he was harbouring a "fell disease" which was to prove fatal to him. With the best medical aid in the world, fate proved too strong, and though he wanted to live to fulfil his longings and ambitions, *karma* had decreed that he should throw off his ailing physical body, to rest a while in the higher worlds ere taking up a new one to carry on his unfulfilled desires and dreams. "As we sow, so we shall reap"; Manu has sown well and he is sure to reap well.

Bombay, 1st March, 1950. G. Venkatachalam

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Ahivasi : Message

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(1)

Jagannath Ahivasi

A strangely silent man for an artist, Jagannath Ahivasi is one of the outstanding painters of the present renaissance and the leader of a new art movement in Western India. Both in temperament and outlook he has more in common with artists like Nandalal Bose and Venkatappa than with any of his contemporaries in that part of India.

Of humble parentage and with no patronage, official or otherwise, he rose to his present position as an artist by sheer hard work and dint of merit. He was born in Muttra, the son of a temple *kirtankar*, (singer of songs) and his early life was spent in sacred temple precincts and amidst music and festivals. These have left deep and lasting impressions on his mind and heart, and hence his simple, serene nature and orthodox manners.

He was a born Vaishnavite and therefore a devotee both in thought and action. His father wanted his son to be a temple musician like himself but the son chose to be a painter much against his father's wishes. It was only later when young Jagannath proved a successful

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

painter that his father became proud of his son. Whatever is fine in his life and art Ahivasi owes them to his saintly father, who was also like a mother to him, as his natural mother died when he was very young.

Porbunder is known throughout the world as the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi; in this sea-girt town Ahivasi's youthful days were spent. It was here he had his early art training, and his first job as a drawing master was at the Anjuman School there. He found there his first *guru* in the person of Shri Maladewa Rana, who encouraged him in this art. Not long after he joined the J. J. School of Art in Bombay, where he worked hard and diligently for two years, amidst trying circumstances and hardships, and made a name for himself as a student and promising artist. He was a winner of many prizes and a Government Scholarship during that period.

Helped by friends, like Goswami Shri Gokulnathji Maharaj and Seth Kalyanji Karamsi Damji, and encouraged by his young devoted wife, he continued his studies as an art student and not only secured a gold medal for the best painting of the year but stood first in his diploma examination. His two best known paintings of that period were "Chitra-lekha" and "Drama", which won for him praise from people like Sir John Marshal, Sir Leslie Wilson and others.

Gladstone Solomon, seeing his great talents for mural paintings, awarded him a scholarship for mural decorative art, and later selected him for the Delhi Prize Scheme. Ahivasi's wall paintings on the ceilings of the Delhi Secretariat may still be seen and admired, though the colours are slowly fading away.

Ahivasi's unique contribution to the modern renaissance lies in his conscious efforts to revive the Rajput tradition and technique in Indian art, with its bold schematic colour schemes and fine draughtsmanship, and not in continuing the Japanese "wet-wash" methods so much in vogue among the painters of the Bengal School. In his best works are to be seen the best elements of not only the Rajput style but also Ajanta and Mughal mannerisms. His well-known works in this style are: "The Message" (reproduced in this book), "Subhadra and Arjun", "Saint Haridas",

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

"Manmatha", "Namakaranam", "Sandesh," and "Departure of Meera."

Shy, modest and unostentatious, Ahivasi is a lovable man, a true friend and an ideal teacher. A student of literature, he is a poet in his own native tongue, apart from being a keen student of Hindi, Sanskrit and Gujerathi. His home is a rendezvous for all young artists, where they seek not only advice and help but find it a haven of rest and peace. He is ever willing to listen to their trials and difficulties and to champion their cause even against vested interests and stout oppositions. For a Vaishnavite, he is a liberal-minded Hindu and an admirer of the Buddha.

He is to-day the Head of the Indian Art Section of the J. J. School of Art, where he is popular both among students and the staff. The Gujerati Sahitya Parishad honoured him recently by asking him to preside over its latest conference; and as a member of the All-India Association of Fine Arts, he has endeared himself to one and all by his simple unassuming manners and sincere outspoken nature. Ahivasi is a good a man as he is a great artist.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(2)

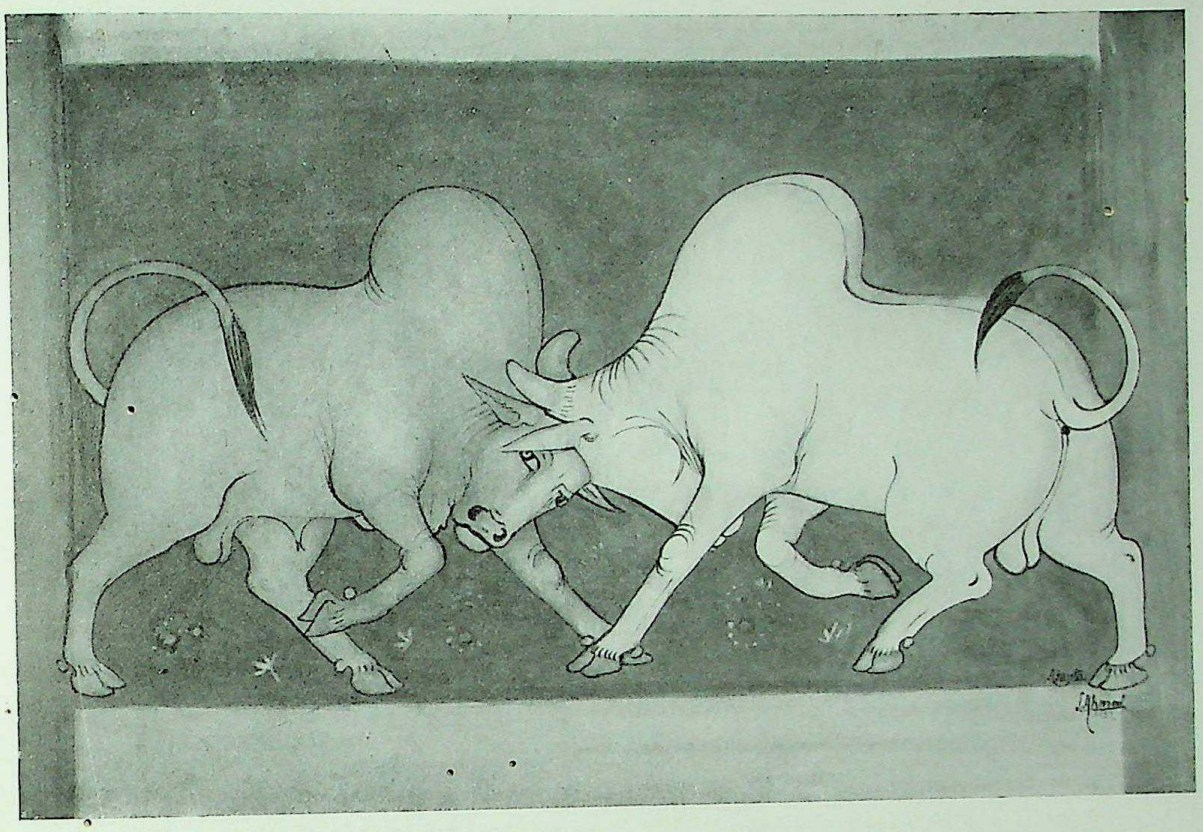
Syed Ahmed

WITH the decline of Buddhism about the 7th century A.D., Ajanta, the abode of Buddhist art, also began to pass into the limbo of oblivion. For over a period of 1200 years these sacred shrines went through a process of decay and neglect, and it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the world was reminded of them by a brief description of the Ajanta wall paintings by Sir James Alexander in *The Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* published in 1819. Since then Ajanta has been a place of pilgrimage for artists, philosophers and historians from all over the world.

The first copies of the wall paintings were attempted about a hundred years ago by Major Robert Gill (1844-63.) Some of them can still be seen at the South Kensington Museum. The second serious attempt was made by Mr. John Griffiths, who completed his work by 1885. About 56 of his copies are preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Indian Section).

The third attempt, with the help of Indian artists, was made by

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Syed Ahmed : Bull Fight (*Ajanta*)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
Lady Herringham, in the years 1906-1911, when Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, K. Venkatappa, Surendranath Ganguly and Syed Ahmed were employed to copy the frescoes.

On completion of his work under Lady Herringham, Mr. Syed Ahmed was appointed as a drawing master in an industrial school at Hyderabad, but his ability was at once noticed and he was made the Curator of the Ajanta Caves in 1916. He worked in that capacity for a continuous period of 24 years.

Khan Bahadur Syed Ahmed's name has come to be intimately associated with Ajanta. He has made over 500 faithful copies of the frescoes and a number of book illustrations. Several of his copies decorate British, American and Japanese museums. He has done more than anyone else to popularise the art of Ajanta. In 1930, the Government of India conferred on him the title of Khan Bahadur for this special service to Indian Art.

Syed Ahmed was born in 1889, in Aurangabad (Deccan) and soon showed a remarkable talent for painting. Once, while he was schooling at Aurangabad, his mathematics teacher caught him sketching instead of solving a problem in algebra. The teacher, annoyed, told him to join an art school. Syed Ahmed took the hint, went to Bombay and joined the J. J. School of Art. By means of scholarships he continued his studies till he obtained a Diploma. He made his mark at an Indian art exhibition held in Allahabad in 1911.

At the instance of the late Sir Akbar Hydari, he started the Hyderabad Fine Arts and Crafts School and among his well-known pupils were Syed Bin Mohamed, Syed Akbar Ally and Pillai.

He is a decorative artist and paints mostly in water colour. His association with Ajanta frescoes is deep and intimate. He has reproduced the best pieces of the *Jataka* stories, and what is considered to be his best work called "Black Princess" is with Sir Ghulam Mohammed.

Among Sir Akbar Hydari's collections is his beautiful piece "Bodhisattva". His other well-known works are: 'Bodhisattva Padmapani," "Bodhisattva Avalokiteswara," "Mahajaraka Jataka" (Palace

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Scene), "Bull fight", (here reproduced) and "Punishment of a Dancing Girl". Mr. Syed Ahmed is at present evolving Ajanta designs for saris, borders, pallavs and brocades, thus encouraging the famous arts and crafts of Patana.

Art runs in his family. His son, Syed Masood Ahmed, is now the Principal of the Art School, Hyderabad. His wife, Betty Elizabeth, an English woman, is also an artist working as a designer in Mushirabad Cottage Industries.

Ajanta caves are one of the wonders of the world. These caves, overlooking the Wagora stream, are carved out of a cliff and form a series of 29 caves, divided into *Chaityas* and *Viharas*. They date from 200 B. C. (Caves No. 9 and 10) to 628 A.D. (Caves No. 1 & 2.)

The long subtle curves, bold and vigorous lines, executed with a single sweep of the brush and uniform thickness of line are the chief features of Ajanta paintings. Though they have faced the ravages of time and weather the impasto still retains its solidity and freshness. The paintings have a timeless quality of perfection, and in the art of Asia enjoy a supreme position. No other single spot in the East gives a more comprehensive record of the religion, art, social and civic concepts of the Buddhists than Ajanta.

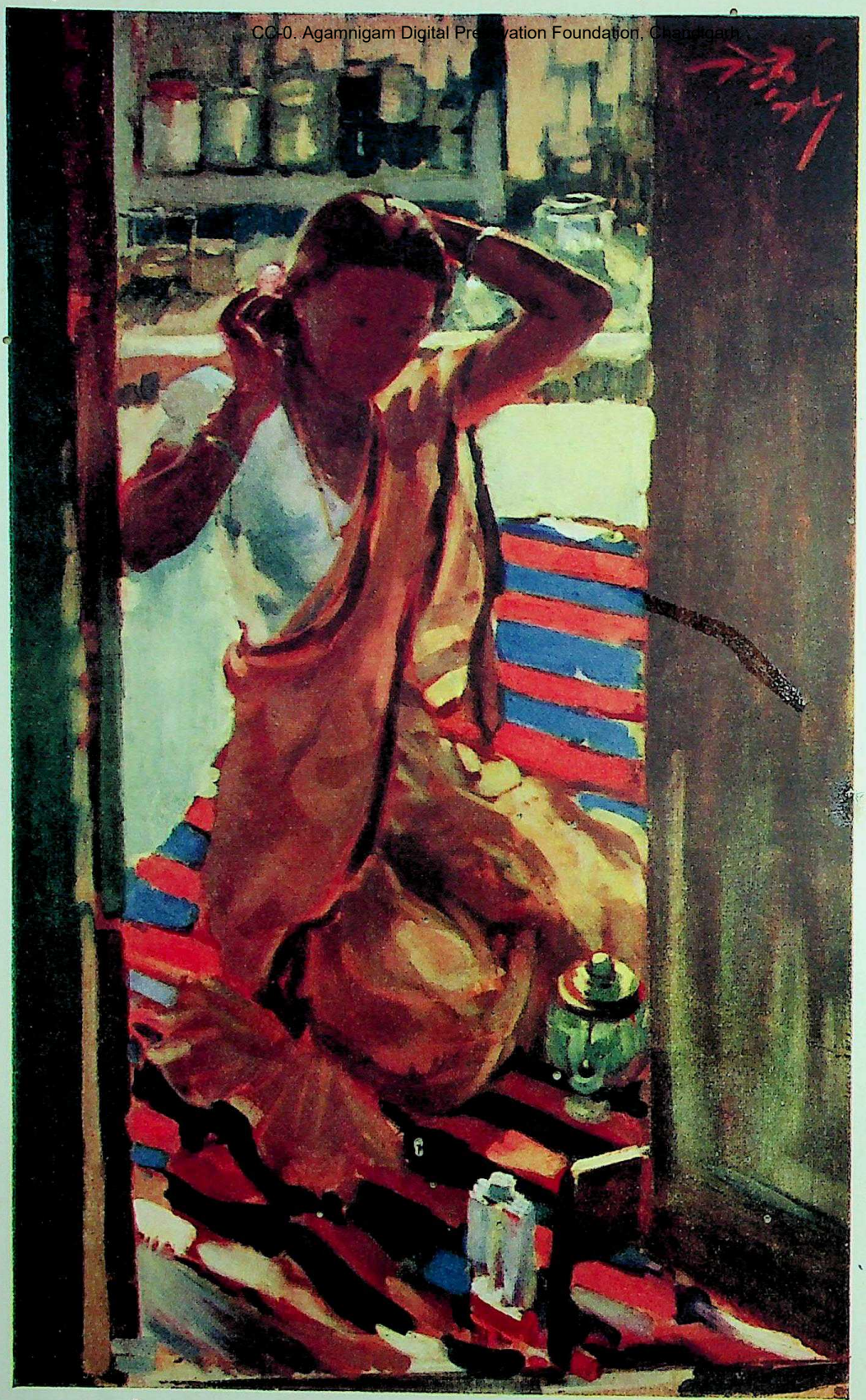
Taranath, the historian of 700 A.D., remarks: "Wherever Buddhism prevailed, skilful, religious artists were found". Even the earliest painting at Ajanta represents no primitive beginning but the accomplished work of a school of artists trained to a very high degree.

The Buddhist art relics in Tibet, Cambodia, Java, and Ceylon are the later offshoots of Ajanta. Buddhist artists followed precisely the "six limbs of Indian painting", which are the six canons of perfection in art.

The *Jataka* stories make one feel that the Buddhist painter at Ajanta was an artist-priest, illustrating in pictorial parables all the beautiful sentiments of the Buddhist religion.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh



Bendre : Toilet

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(3)

N. S. Bendre

SHREE Aurobindo once said: "Technique is only the means of expression. One does not write merely to use beautiful words, or paint for the sole sake of line and colour; there is something that one is trying through these means to express or discover."

India abounds in techniques as well as in subjects or themes. Hence for true portrayal or expression, the artist has to select correctly his medium and technique so as to convey adequately the subject matter.

Mr. N. S. Bendre has specially endeavoured to learn the current techniques by visiting Government schools of art and private art institutions all over the country. He has developed a comparative and critical faculty and has ample choice of techniques to suit the treatment of his subjects.

This is the secret of his art, by which he is able to achieve emotional sensitiveness in his pictures by appropriate choice of colour, medium and technique.

He has stayed with artists like D. P. Roy Choudhry, Manishi Dey,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Ishwar Dass and others just to study their techniques. Of course, technique can be mastered by constant practice of a medium, and Bendre has both the patience and the will to undergo such a vigorous training. He would never fail to visit museums during his travels, and he would study the ancient art motifs, colours, costumes, etc. in order to know the India of the past.

Bendre is undoubtedly a versatile artist. He is descriptive at times, representational at other times; he may be naturalistic in one picture, and purely romantic in another. He is always anxious to see a new work and how it is executed, and will borrow or invent a formula to paint a particular type of subject. From his paintings one can perceive his exceptional grasp of form and content and his effortless skill.

He does not boast of commissioned portraits of high officials or popular society figures, but his pleasure lies in his study of a variety of Indian types. He prefers freedom to paint what he wishes and in the style he prefers.

Bendre will choose to paint anything—it may be a temple in South Canara, or a tea stall in Kulu Valley, or a sea plunderer of Chanchia or passengers at a railway station.

He is lucky to have as his partner in life Mrs. Mohana Bendre who is also an artist. They jointly exhibited their works in 1945. Mr. Karl Khandalawala, paying a tribute to him at his one-man-show, said. "The finest one-man-show ever exhibited by a Bombay artist, with such high sense of colour and clarity of expression."

Born at Indore in 1910, Bendre was educated at the Indore School and obtained the Government art diploma in 1933 in Bombay. He was President of the Art Society of India for one year.

Mr. Bendre is perhaps the most travelled artist in India, because in a brief period of six years, from 1933 to 1939, he visited many parts of the country, and stayed for about three years in Kashmir.

He visited Shantiniketan and worked with many artists there in order to imbibe its Indian spirit and grasp the techniques followed there. He also studied the methods of preparing earthen colours which he has

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

used in a number of pictures. In his opinion these earthen colours are very suitable for mural paintings as they possess special tone values.

Within ten years Mr. Bendre has won over 30 prizes of high order, including prizes of the Governors of Bombay and Bengal.

His picture, "Freedom From Want," depicting the appalling tragedy of the Bengal famine, is a grim spectacle showing hungry souls dying for want of food.

His picturesque "Patna Houses," with their bright colour schemes, his study of "Tea Planter Girls at Darjeeling", his "Cot Fitters of South Canara" and the sketches of wells and mud-cottages of Gujerat and Kathiawar are all rich studies in Indian life. His clever mural painting of "Village-life", done recently, now adorns Mr. V. R. Nimbker's house.

Mr. Bendre is famous for his French gouache style in his landscapes. His studies of Kashmir valleys, Naini Tal lakes, Ootacamund hills, Mussoorie's pigeon-house-like bungalows, the peaks of Amarnath, are all examples of his artistic zeal.

His historical oil-study of "Omkareswar" has won him high popularity. He has also tackled political subjects, a popular piece being "Gandhiji at prayer meeting". His painting "Buddha Worship" done on silk in the manner of a Tibetan banner, was painted when he visited Nalanda, the Buddhist place of pilgrimage, where the black image of the Buddha, seven feet in height, stands in a solitary monastery. This place is the scene of an annual fair for Buddhist pilgrims, who flock there from all parts of Asia.

"Spring" is a study of trees in which we can feel the warmth of the burning sun. The wind-swept "Palas" flowers are refreshing to the eye and confirm the strength of his brush.

His "Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam," is a masterpiece in miniature painting. He has painted a series of 75 pictures in miniature size of 3 ins. x 2 ins., using oils, water colours and crayons. These are done with such a fine brush—the figures are like dots—that unless seen through a magnifying glass they are hardly perceptible.

Bendre has retained his youthful eagerness for study. Only a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

few days before his departure on a foreign tour he told the writer. "I have yet a lot to study. I shall settle down to paint as an artist only after having completed my foreign tour and studied the various techniques followed by the great artists of the United States, United Kingdom and Europe. I am going there with my works to show what India really is in its hundreds of villages. Westerners know India mostly through its ancient art and not by its present day arts."

"I intend to exhibit my work at the Govil Galleries at Chicago and the Art Gallery at Philadelphia."

When asked by the writer what he liked to paint in India, he replied, "I would like to paint the people of Malabar, the scenery of the Himalayas, the colour and costumes of Kathiawar, and the Hindu architecture of Southern India."

He returned over a year ago after an extensive study tour of the United States England and a number of other countries in Europe and the Far East, with a fund of information and impressions which should prove highly interesting and valuable to his fellow artists in this country. Leaving Bombay by ship, he passed through Colombo, visited Singapore, made a number of interesting sketches at Hongkong and Shanghai, from where he went to San Francisco. From Frisco he went on to New York, thence to England and Europe. His sketch-book carries most vivid impressions of his tour.

He spent several months in America, studying American art and the art trends and influences at work in that country. He made a special study of 'graphic' art. What struck him most was that America had not yet developed an art of its own. Many influences were at work, English, French, Dutch, Spanish, Red Indian, African, and Oriental. Not only in art but also in music and architecture all these influences had contributed much for its achievements.

Bendre told me it was during his tour of America that he realised for the first time to what extent and purpose collections of art treasures and exhibitions can be made. Private individuals and museums vied with one another in gathering together and showing the works of the best

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

artists. Huge sums of money were spent every year in this respect. In Washington and New York there were scores of galleries displaying Renaissane paintings of Europe. Some galleries were full of Rembrandts, while at Philadelphia, Renoir occupied an entire hall, and at Chicago French post-impressionist works were in predominance.

"In New York", Bendre observed, "every modern art museum possesses at least one painting of each of the well known masters who have influenced American Art. I saw many prints of Japanese masters with private individuals. Everything that has an art appeal is collected, and art collecting is a great business in America. The Americans have no national pride which tends to ignore or belittle the art works of other countries".

Talking next about art in France, Bendre said that the people there were more art conscious. Even a taxi-driver or maid servant was as much interested in works of art as students in India were interested in cricket. Compared with artists in France, those in India did not devote so much attention and labour to their craft. In India after completing a school course or getting a degree or winning some prizes at exhibitions, people felt they were full-fledged artists. In the West it was different. Unless an artist contributed something original in conception or style or offered some new aesthetical explanation in his work, he was not accepted as an artist.

A recognised artist had a social status. He was treated just as a successful practising doctor or lawyer. According to Bendre, France still leads the West in art matters. The influence of modern French artists was predominant in the west. In England academical art was still dominant. The older generation cling to its conservative tastes in art, but the younger generation was coming under the influence of the post-impressionist movement.

Bendre had an opportunity of seeing representative works of Mexican artists. Though they seemed to look to France for inspiration, it was evident they had developed a robust outlook.

Offering a few suggestions for adoption in this country, Bendre

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

pleaded that annual exhibitions of art should not be held like dog or flower shows, but should become part of the daily social life of the people. A vast country like India should also have retrospective annual shows, in which at least one work of every top-rank artist, who has exhibited his pictures during the year, should be shown. Such retrospective exhibitions would serve as a survey or review of contemporary art in the country.

Bendre concluded by saying that there was colossal ignorance about Indian art in the West, although one could hear remarks that Indian art occasionally showed the influence of Whistler and Matisse! it was the duty of the Government, art patrons and critics to see that Indian art was properly and correctly interpreted to the West.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Bhagat : Fisherwomen

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(4)

Vajubhai Bhagat

THE Artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist." Thus observed the late Ananda Coomaraswamy. Each individual reacts in his own way to works of art. To appreciate and understand a work of art intelligently one should place oneself in the position of the artist.

Vajubhai Bhagat is an artist of originality. His approach to art differs radically from that of many who try various styles, mediums and materials, and paint for the fun of it. He maintains that painting is a personal art and is both subjective and objective. He does not follow the laws of perspective or the rules of anatomy or copy life but paints from memory.

Nandalal Bose, a pioneer of Indian renaissance, recently paid a glowing tribute to Bhagat's art. He wrote, "Shri Bhagat is a talented artist and paints in his own distinctive style, which is peculiarly Indian. He has successfully depicted modern subjects in indigenous style". Bhagat's paintings are a happy blending of the traditional with the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

modern; and this is to be clearly seen in his mural designs. His works, though two-dimensional, are not flat, and it is in this subtle differentiation that he achieves originality.

Bhagat comes from a family of Jewellers. When only seven, he chose to be a student of art, and instead of attending school, roamed about the streets to watch the life around him and to sketch gods like Hanuman, his favourite deity. His childhood days have a deep bearing on his art.

Art School education is not necessary for an artist, but for an elementary knowledge of drawing and sketching one must attend such a school for a time. Until 1942 he was mostly academic, and handled oils, etching, woodcuts, linocuts, etc. Then there came a complete change in his outlook. The forceful technique of the bold murals of Pandan-Singha, Nana Rajkot and Sihor made a deep impression on him. He felt that true Indian art was not in the three-dimensional outlook of city artists, but in the two dimensional method of village art. When painting three-dimensional pictures he has a feeling that a camera is at work.

Bhagat toured North India and Rajputana to study India's past but nothing inspired him so much as the Jain miniatures in the Baroda Museum, and of these he made a prolonged study. One of his bright compositions "Winter" first brought him into the limelight. It is a good example of his style.

Bhagat feels that true art relies exclusively on its own logic. He abhors models. His model is a mental image. "Subtract the mind", he says, "and the eyes are opened to no purpose. A painting should have primarily the charm of conception."

He once remarked to the writer: "In the present trends of painting, somehow we seem to have lost both the Indian technique and taste, whereas in Indian music the technique is preserved to a greater degree and only the taste is lost. We need to study the permanent values of Indian art and draw inspiration from the old masters."

He dislikes oils because he finds that the strength of line, the main feature of Indian painting, is lost in that medium. He paints

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

these days in tempera. He is a keen observer but does not paint continuously. He has to be moved by his subject before he takes up the painting of a picture. He wants to be literally "possessed" by it.

Bhagat does not like the tricks and jig-saw puzzles of the pseudo-modern artists. He believes that in the grotesque attempts of so-called "modern" art, the artist sometimes sells his soul to cater to decadent and perverted tastes; and this, he feels, is criminal.

He does bring out "shape-resemblance" and observes the principle of ideal proportion. Bhagat does not touch mythological subjects now—not that he dislikes them, but he feels that the traditional artists have dealt with them so well in the past that it would be just imitation to repeat them.

His works are of a serious character, though light in theme, and he executes them in detail. His "Fire Brigade Station" (cover picture for the Illustrated Weekly of India of November 1928) was a clear study by night with soothing reds and toned yellows.

"Grant Road Station, Bombay" one of his three paintings reproduced in the same Journal, is a unique study, with no perspective. The "station-rush" feeling is predominant. Observe the selling of odd things, the over-bridge and the staircases packed with crowded figures—and yet note the calculated simplification. With pure colours and broken tones he weaves a realistic pattern.

As he does not use perspective, one almost feels as if the picture is seen from more than one point of view. Perspective is nothing but the means employed to convey to the spectator the idea of true dimensional space, and if one studies the history of art one finds this method of representing space has varied from period to period and artist to artist. In some periods space is taken for granted as a primary datum of intelligence! Usually perspective is used because it best corresponds to our own habits of vision and therefore requires the least effort for comprehension. The wall paintings in some of the villages of Kathiawar are so life-like because of their two-dimensional character.

In the painting "Ayahs", there are three different types—a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Christian, a Madrassi, and a Burmese—with their charges. It is a close study in character and colour, a suave and beautiful execution of a familiar, commonplace theme. He has carefully modulated the browns and greens with diluted whites.

In "Matheran Boys" the subjects have purposely been drawn with their eyes wide open, the curious look they usually have when gazing at visitors to the hill station. He has also done some interesting landscape studies of Matheran. Two of his works "Landscape (Bassein)" and "Screen Printing Factory" have been chosen for the Royal Academy's exhibition in London. He has also done a number of Kathiawar village scenes, many of which have gone out of the country.

Bhagat is now in his thirties. Strange as it may seem, the best of his works have not been exhibited as yet! He cares little for fame and less for money through art. Since 1943 he has not participated in any exhibition. He believes that pure aesthetic experience is known only to those in whom the knowledge of ideal beauty is innate.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Chavda : Varli Women

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(5)

Shiavax Chavda

DESIGNING means the selection and arrangement of lines, forms and colours to attain order and beauty. Shiavax Chavda is a master of this art. He lays emphasis on the main idea, balances his forms, evolves rhythm in their movements, and even exaggerates proportions to give strength to his pattern.

His works have a character and bear the stamp of individuality. At times with utmost simplicity he achieves a fine decorative design.

Chavda hails from Navsari in Southern Gujerat. He studied at the J. J. School of Art, Bombay, from 1930 to 1936, and then went to Europe. He was at the Slade School under Prof. Randolf Schwabe, and obtained a diploma in Fine Arts.

He took courses in portraiture, *bas-reliefs*, restoration work, wood carving and lithography, and spent a year in Paris studying at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere.

Returning to India in 1939, Chavda tried his hand at commercial art, portraits and mural decoration. For a time he was art director in a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

well-known film unit.

He does not go to mythology for his subjects unless specially required, as in the case of a huge mural for the Tata's Air India Office in Bombay.

The panel of horses published in the Illustrated Weekly of India some time ago is another specimen of his mural art and a fine example of Chavda's decorative art.

The powerful *bas-reliefs*, depicting progress, commerce, industry and agriculture on the front of the People's Building in Sir Phirozeshah Mehta Road, Bombay, are also his work.

His "Calico Printers", "Mother's love" "Worship in Kulu," have all won high praise at exhibitions held in Bombay and Delhi. His "Rangoli", "Toddy Sellers", "In the Balcony", "Elephants" are, perhaps, the best specimens of his designs.

His "Daily Work", reproduced also in the Illustrated Weekly, showed two Dubla girls of south Gujerat pounding rice. In the background are earthen "kothis" for grain storage. He achieves perfect design by using few forms and colours. It is a skilfully handled work with pleasing results.

He is continuously in search of new subjects, new angles, new patterns, new arrangements of colour, hence his work has an unusual freshness about it.

He carved the wooden entrance of a public school in Bombay and executed some murals for children's class-rooms. Chavda is modest, unpretentious and steady. He has a sincere approach to his subjects and balances his figures well.

He is a rapid and prolific painter; often he completes a picture in a day and at times in one sitting. Within three years, he held three one-man exhibitions and expects to hold another one soon.

He was a president of the Gujerat Kala Mandal and is an active member of a number of art institutions. Owing to his background of western academic training, to some he appears to be experimenting with Indian themes and as if having to struggle to achieve the Indian spirit

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

in his works.

Though he does not really enjoy painting portraits, he has to his credit a number of fine portraits, including one of Mahatma Gandhi.

He is not merely a decorator of the flat surface. His colour grouping and originality of design raise him above the ordinary. His arrangement of oblongs and diamond shapes and cubes gives a new tonal effect to his subjects. Often by running a black line he brings together their unity.

Chavda uses water colours, oils, pastels and tempera. He is at his best in tempera and uses any material, paper, silk or wood, that is suitable. His fountain pen sketches fill a number of books and of his recent ones, of dancing figures at the famous Chidambaram temple, show his mastery over anatomy. His ink and wash studies and landscapes of Kashmir and Kulu are delightfully refreshing.

"Booking Office" is a good tone-design, with all the principles of harmony and balance well applied. One observes the harmony of colour where all the tones of the composition are of the same colour (bluish), although varying in value and intensity. The figures in the group give an impression of unity of arrangement, with a careful eye to proportion. They have much similarity and yet are so different. This is one of his latest works in which the vertical lines of standing figures give an impression of dignity while the horizontal lines give a feeling of repose. The contours of the figures are worth noting. At times he flattens forms into two dimensional pattern to gain his objective.

To my query as to why he freely uses any colour for human figures or for horses, he replied: "If we wish to see the colour of flesh as it is, where is the need for an artist? I cannot understand why artists should be bound by man-made laws and be compelled to present the world as it is, instead of encouraging them to something uncommon, something that pleases the eye and creates a colourful pattern.

"Correctness of colour does not matter. I even distort the figures to give them character and create designs with them. I find no pleasure in actually reproducing life as I see and paint realistically; where is

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

creative imagination otherwise?" This is his approach to art.

He believes that the modernisation of Indian art does not necessitate the elimination of its traditional character. He feels free from the restraints of academic art and paints in any manner he likes best. He raises the new art problem: "Do we want novelties or just an orthodox foundation?".

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Ishwar Das : Flame

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(6)

Ishwar Dass

A true artist is not a mere seller of ideas, but one who through his work inspires in the spectator sentiments and emotions similar to those which inspired him to creative enterprise. The aim of all art should be to create a world in which the imagination of the ordinary man is aroused to the contemplation of noble and beautiful ideals.

Judged by these standards and tests, Ishwar Dass, the young exponent of Moghul art, has undoubtedly found a unique place for himself among the contemporary artists of India—nay, of the world. With a high level of conception and execution, he has presented to us a series of pictures providing vivid glimpses into the chequered history of the Moghul period, not from its highways but from its by-ways; not of the pompous court scenes and battle-fields, but of the quiet domestic and social life of the period.

Ishwar Dass hails from a well-known Shah family which flourished in the days of the Nawabs of Oudh. Small-built, and smart in appearance, he is very unassuming in his manner. Spending his early

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

days in Lucknow amidst surroundings rich in relics of Moghul art and architecture and inspired by the excellent collection of Rajput and Moghul paintings preserved by his parents, Ishwar Dass developed a great love for these schools of art in which today he enjoys an unrivalled position.

He started sketching when he was seven and steadily worked his way up. He gained initial public recognition of his merit at the Naini Tal Art Club Exhibition for his painting "Temple Dancer", when he was only fifteen. Discerning in him the traits of a true artist, his father, Shree Krishna Dass, gave him the utmost encouragement by engaging the renowned artist P. R. Roy to teach him. The influence of this great teacher is clearly seen in most of the works of Ishwar Dass. In 1935 he joined the Lucknow School of Art under the famous artist Asit Haldar, and after graduation came to Bombay. Later on as he boarded a ship bound for London, where he intended to join the Royal College of Arts, came news of the outbreak of war and he was obliged to abandon the trip. Years later he told the writer. "If I had gone to England at that time, I would not have become a devotee of Indian art."

Ishwar Dass paints in water colours and shows great mastery in his wash methods. He has specialised in both Moghul and Rajput styles. Occasionally he does oil portraits (he was recently commissioned to paint Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar) or just daubs a landscape, but his pet subjects are romantic themes portraying life and joy, leisure and amusements, music and dancing of the Moghul times.

The works of Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, whose execution of Indian subjects in Indian style with Chinese wet and Japanese wash methods introduced new art trends in India, inspired Ishwar Dass to adopt the wash style of painting in which he excels today. In his technique he blends colours so well as to correspond with the range of emotions. Like breath, his figures have rhythmic movement.

Ishwar Dass is the moving spirit among the U.P. artists, and is the secretary of the U. P. Artists' Association. He has won prizes at a number of exhibitions, notable among which were the Punjab Fine Arts Society's Exhibition, the Mysore Dassera Art Exhibition, the Academy

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

of Fine Arts, Calcutta, Shilpakala Parishad, Patna, Bombay Art Society and Nagpur Art Society exhibitions.

His work "Toilet" is a glimpse into a lady's boudoir into which only artists through the penetrating vision of their imagination are privileged to venture. He has also painted several vignettes portraying the daily life of the ladies of the Moghul court. He has made a deep study of the aesthetics, costumes and ornaments of the Moghul period, and he captures the atmosphere so well that he can present to us the long vanished glory of the Moghul era.

He has painted a beautiful series of Bhakta Surdas which won high appreciation in the Indian section of the Bombay Art Society's exhibition some years ago. Writing a foreword to this series, his guru, Asit Kumar Haldar, remarked: "He is dominantly lyrical and his grasp of the subject matter is unique. Both descriptive interest and poignant emotional expression characterise his achievements."

"Lady with the Lute", "Beggar Boy", "Lute Player and Pigeons", "Designs for the Taj", "Emperor Jehangir's visit to Art Studios" and "Flame" are works of a very high order. Temperamentally his subjects have been visualisations and not models or pretty landscapes. Art critic O. C. Gangoly has said of him that "unlike the contemporary painters of the Moghul court scenes and gorgeous formalities, he has chosen to depict the daily life of the princes and potentates".

"Musician" is a happy composition done in wash style. There is a freshness and charm and a freedom from convention in Ishwar Dass' style which is so delicate and rich. He does not paint the battle-fields of Patna or Seringapatam, but the social and domestic life of Moghul times. To him, resuscitating the dead would mean an emotional satisfaction.

His own conception of an artist was given by Ishwar Dass while speaking at the Culture Society, Lucknow. He said: "The principal aim of an artist is to express his emotions through form and colour, just as a poet does through words, and a musician through tunes."

Ishwar Dass' place in the Indian art world can be summed up thus: "What Jamini Roy is to folk art, Ishwar Dass is to lyrical art".

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(7)

Rabindra Dutt

BORN in a family of artists, with more than an ordinary share of natural artistic talents, Mr. Rabindra Dutt has with comparative ease achieved for himself a conspicuous position among contemporary Indian painters. He had never been to any art school, though in his early days he was very much influenced by the works and art teaching of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose.

Whatever instructions or training he received in his early days, he got from his father and brothers. Today Dutt is an accomplished artist, an authority on child art education and enjoys a unique prestige in the field of leather craft. He is ably assisted by Mrs. Jashu Dutt, his wife, who is also an artist with a special gift for designing. The Dutts paint together!

Dutt was born on November 23, 1907, at Calcutta and had his schooling at Berhampur, in Murishidabad District. He came to Bombay in 1929 to work as an art teacher. His special interest was the art education of children, and in this line he developed some singular methods not

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Rabindra Dutt : Harvest

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
altogether liked or approved by the convention-bound Educational Inspectors.

In fact, Pulin Dutt, his elder brother, and he gave a definite lead to the Indian art movement in Bombay. The writer had the good fortune of working under him and of seeing almost everything he has painted since 1932. Even his first strokes in those years had a masterly touch.

Another field in which Dutt is deeply interested is leather-craft. He thinks that every artist must know some craft in which art and beauty can combine with utility. But for the last fifteen years, he has concentrated on leather work, which is known both in India and abroad. Sri Nandalal Bose once remarked that Dutt's leather work was typically Indian with a finish and beauty seldom rivalled. His wife has also a special aptitude for painting and leather-craft.

One of his paintings was selected for the Royal Academy Exhibition in London. Modest by nature, Dutt shuns publicity and avoids exhibitions. Once when his wife tried to persuade him to hold an exhibition of his paintings, he remarked, "Who would come to see my paintings ?"

He is a craftsman first and an artist afterwards, and so all his works have decorative characteristics. With the dance as his motif, he has executed a number of compositions. His works belong to a small independent category of their own. The elasticity of his line, the realism of his compositions and the boldness of his brush strokes prove that they are more compelling in vigour than in grace.

His village-life studies are true to life, intimate and enchanting. He is not to be labelled with any particular school of painting. Style or technique is a means rather than an end to him. Once he remarked, "The most crucial stage in painting is to be able to judge rightly where to stop or else the picture is either half complete or over finished. This is where most of us err."

He is extremely gifted in creating perfectly balanced compositions. His "Procession of the Princess" was a good example. Each of his many styles and periods proves the excellence of his taste. He has made fine

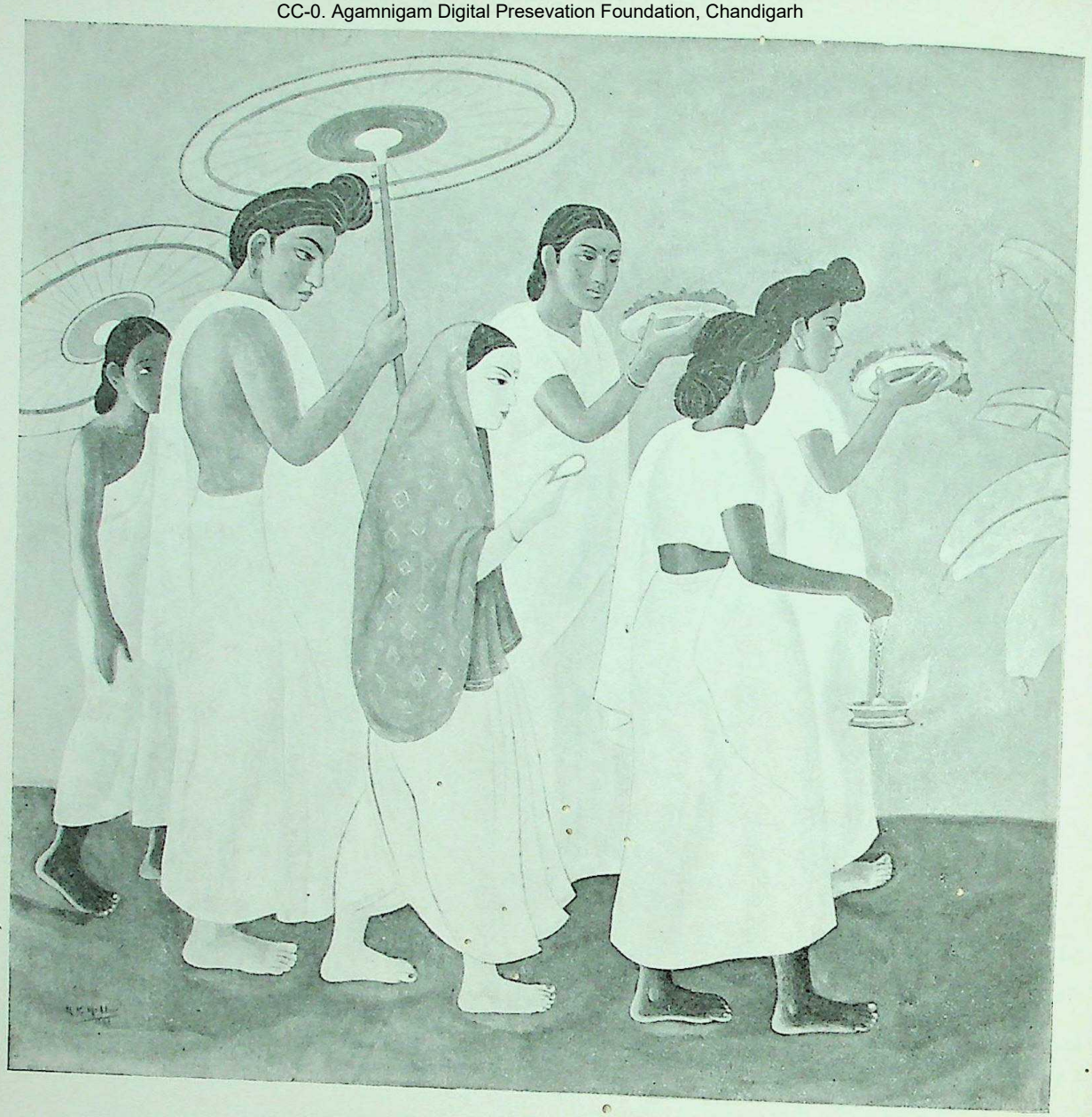
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
dry-brush studies of birds and animals. He has specialised in stage-costumes and choreography too. He has twice created a sensation in the stage world when he produced all the costumes out of paper only for the play entitled "Jack of Hearts" and ornaments made of leather for a concert in aid of the Bengal Famine Relief Fund.

All his works show originality of thought and rich emotional experience. You may see him working on a serious piece in the traditional Moghul style for a fortnight and then suddenly starts a new picture and bursts into a riot of deep, brilliant colours, and completes it in about fifteen minutes !

His light-wash studies have the sweetness of a gentle, sensitive, lyrical song. His innovations are praiseworthy. In his adjustments of tonal values and choice of colours he excels the ordinary artist; in precision, he is seldom excelled. He is never keen to sell his paintings. "I paint," he says, "for the inner satisfaction that the spirit needs."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



K. K. Hebbar: Maidenhood

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(8)

K. K. Hebbar

IT was a hard and laborious climb for K. K. Hebbar to reach the galaxy of contemporary Indian artists. He was born 35 years ago in a Brahmin family in a village in South Kanara. Brought up amongst village people in a district rich in folk dances and traditional festivals, he reflects his early associations and environment in the subjects of his paintings. He has never regretted being born in a poor family, for it gave him an opportunity to study life with deeper sympathy and draw inspiration for his work from a vaster field. Denied the luxury of a long period of study and training, Hebbar had to find employment as a teacher in a village mission school when he was only 14.

In his childhood he satisfied his creative urge by making wooden toys and colouring them, by modelling clay, and through that commonest form of child art expression—decorating house walls. He had to carry on teaching in the mission school until a European enthusiast, finding in him the qualities of a promising artist, compelled him to give up teaching and to start learning. Thus he came to Bombay to prosecute his studies.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Having completed his high school education in South Kanara, Hebbar came to Bombay and later joined the J. J. School of Art where he obtained a diploma in Drawing and Painting with distinction in 1938. Thereafter he specialised in the mural painting section for a year and came directly under the influence of Mr. C. R. Gerrard, then director of the school, who gave him full scope and encouragement. In 1940 he joined the teaching staff of the school and rose to the position of a senior master of the evening art classes, in which capacity he was working till last year. Today he is a free lance painter with greater freedom for self-expression.

Within a short period of six years, Hebbar has risen to the top rank of Bombay artists. He has exhibited at art exhibitions all over the country, and has won numerous prizes including the Bombay Art Society's Gold Medal early this year for his composition in Indian style entitled "To Maidenhood." He was commissioned by the Government of India to picturise the achievements of the Indian Army in the Italian campaign.

He has to his credit a very successful one-man show held in 1945, and recently one of his paintings won high praise at the UNESCO Exhibition held in Paris.

Mr. Hebbar is an artist with a wanderlust. He is now touring in Europe. He has gone from village to village looking for subjects. He has painted the snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas as well as the sunny beaches of Cape Comorin. He believes that for an Indian artist there is unlimited material in Indian village life—the folk songs and dances, the religious festivals and ceremonies—each place having its own peculiarities and charms.

His studies of South Kanara's "devil dancing", with its crude and mysterious terrors, are a convincing proof of his interest in village art. His sketch book contains a series of dance poses and compositions depicting a variety of forms of devil dancing. Devil dancing has a direct and vital appeal in its manifestations of spirits, and their promptings have an effective hold on mass psychology.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

One of Hebbar's best studies is an elephant procession at night in the Trichur Temple. A glance at his paintings, ranging from South Indian religious festivals to village life in the Kulu Valley, gives even a layman a convincing idea of the richness of festivals in India.

Mr. Hebbar paints both in water colours and oils. His recent work shows a preference for the tempera method. If one perceives traces of "Shergilism" in his art, it is because both he and Amrita Sher Gil drew inspiration from the works of the same artist, Gauguin.

He experiments to evolve a technique of his own, combining eastern and western methods. One such successful experiment is his "Pandits" in which he colourfully presents Lakshachandi Maha Yagna recently held at Bombay.

He uses either style or both and paints to convey his own impressions, but maintains the Indian atmosphere, character and spirit. He has also painted a number of oil portraits in purely Western style including those of Justice Lokur and the rulers of Janjira, Jawhar and Gwalior.

It is not perhaps surprising that most of Hebbar's best works are not in this country, but have gone abroad, having been bought by foreigners. A man of very modest personality, Hebbar has a sincere approach to his subjects and is always responsive to the irresistible beauty of Indian villages. He has experimented in light, ink-and-wash sketches, and his calligraphic work is very neat. In northern India and Bengal he is known by his famous painting "Karla Caves", done in oils with distinctive colour values. "Dance Festival—Kulu" is one of his finest compositions; it portrays a large festive crowd and expresses its innocently gay mood.

Mr. R. V. Leyden once said of his works: "Mr. Hebbar and his contemporaries in India have no easy life. Their artistic progress is a pilgrimage through arid valleys without clear vistas of their target that makes sincere efforts like those of Mr. Hebbar doubly welcome and refreshing." Mr. Gerrard once said of him, "A combination of being a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

good teacher as well as a good practising artist is uncommon and he has these rare combined qualities."

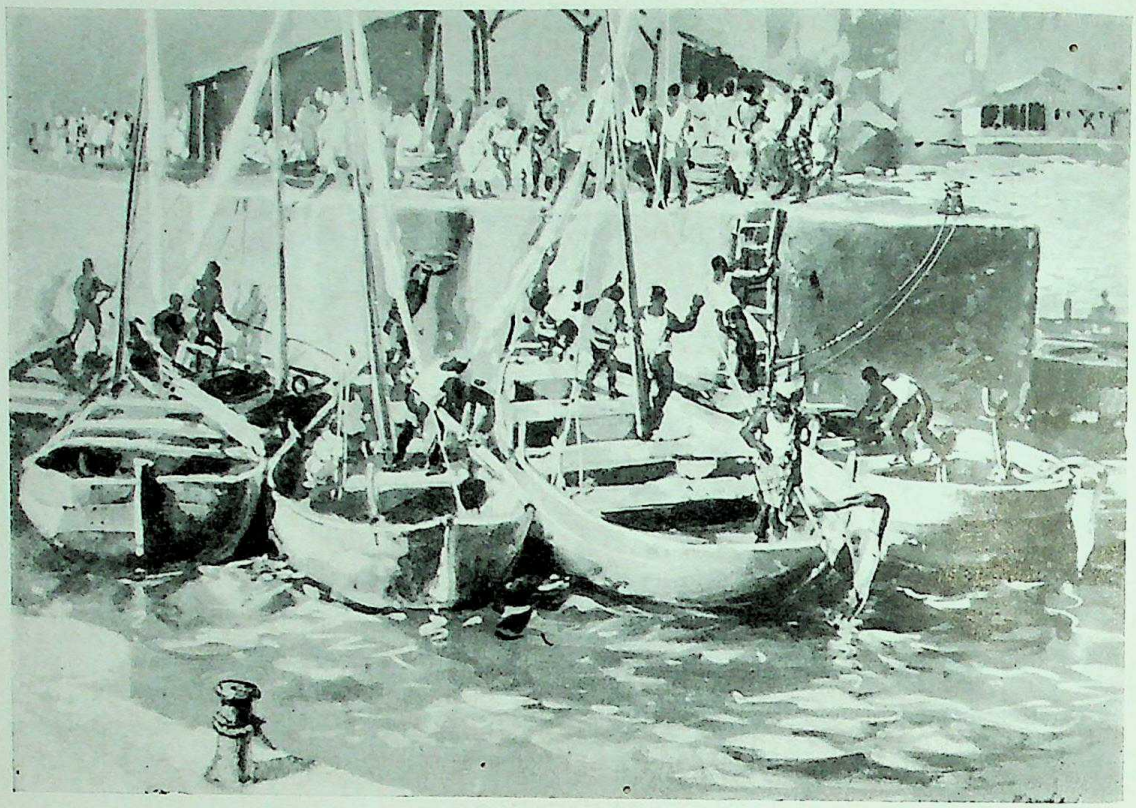
Mr. Hebbar also at times experiments in abstract painting. His "Sunny South", depicting women in a Malabar bazaar, is an outstanding work. His painting, "Maidenhood", won him high praise at the Inter-Asian Exhibition held in New Delhi recently.

His self-portrait along with his mother is one of his latest paintings and he considers it his best. Hebbar has reached a definite stage in the style in which he has executed this painting. He is undoubtedly a dynamic painter whose work will always be welcome.

Colour reproductions of his best works were published by Nalanda Publications with an introduction by Mr. G. Venkatachalam.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Manohar Joshi: Unloading

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(9)

Manohara Joshi

THE truth that the gifts with which Nature endows man are sooner or later bound to prevail is amply illustrated in the life of Manohara Joshi, one of India's best contemporary artists. Son of India's top-class spin bowler S. M. Joshi, of Quadrangular fame, Manohara, in his early days, was an ardent devotee of cricket. He made his mark in the game and had the honour of playing for Central India in the Ranji Trophy tournaments.

He himself does not know why and how he took to painting. He had his grounding in art at the Indore School of Art under the grand old master, Deolailikar. His next training was at the J. J. School of Art in Bombay, where he obtained his diploma with comparative ease. Before starting his art career, Manohara felt that a university education was necessary for the correct and proper interpretation of the social and political life of the people through art. He therefore joined the Holkar College and graduated from the Agra University.

He created quite a stir in art circles when he exhibited two

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

paintings in the 1945 exhibition in Bombay, under the nom-de-plume, "Man O'hara". Everyone wondered who the author of those fantastic paintings was! His one-man show in 1947 gave ample proof of his talents. The thirty-odd large size paintings portrayed almost every aspect of life—social, political and communal; Kashmir warfare, riots, the R. I. N. mutiny, murder, loot-all powerfully conceived and dynamically expressed, some of them veritable nightmares to the spectators. The striking colour combinations with which he sought to create appropriate effects left a lasting impression on those who saw the paintings. As a relief from these pictures he displayed a few pictures which combined talent with ingenuity to such a degree that he was acclaimed as a pictorial humorist.

Joshi's one-man show was unique. It was well attended and was much appreciated, but it sold nothing ! His comment on it was that the class of people who could afford to buy pictures was too conservative and wanted pleasant paintings and not grim realities. "I have literally 'hung' the pictures just to bury them in my portfolio again", he remarked after the show. He does not believe in painting "sweetly conventional" pictures for parlour and drawing room decorations. According to him, a picture may be pleasing or horrifying, but so long as it truly reflects the social or political life of the people, and the artist has enjoyed its execution, nothing else matters.

In "Street Scene from Goa," he has not only made use of the texture of the paper but has also let its red colour show in many places to harmonise with the colour scheme. A view of "Priyole Village," Goa, from his host's house is in the same style. In "Indian Nautch", done on a damped paper so as to bring out the soft, luminous dreamy tone, he shows himself as an expert in wash technique. He has created here an indefinite and illusive atmosphere, in melting colour schemes, displaying admirable control over the nuances of water colour.

In the painting entitled "Housing Racket" (Pugree), he is unquestionably modern. He has planted the prospective tenants with choreographic precision, effectively shown the big hand of refusal representing the landlord, and in the left corner denoted "Pugree" in the form of currency

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
notes. He has done many others in this style which are both modern and understandable.

Manohara's art is a diary of events. He makes art function as a contemporary record, what one might call a newspaper in forms and colours.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(10)

Ravishankar Raval

IN surveying art development in Gujarat, it is necessary to trace the background and some of the important phases through which Indian art and painting have passed during the last hundred years.

It is a well-known fact that religious fervour and state patronage constituted the strongest factors in the promotion and development of art in this country. Every ruling prince or chieftain in mediaeval India had in his court a band of painters, poets, musicians, the number varying with the status, taste and wealth of the ruler. This princely patronage gave the artist a dignified and honourable livelihood and also enabled him to carry on his traditional art. Also, all the religious and social festivals were closely linked with the manifestations of art.

The Moghul courts and durbars gave an honoured position to those who practised the fine arts; and it was during this period that miniature portraiture painting reached its zenith. With the fall of the Moghul Empire, artists had to seek their fortune elsewhere and they spread themselves out to different parts of the country. Some of them

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
moved to Nepal, others to Benares, Jaipur, Sri Nathadwara and, in the South, as far as Trivandrum.

A particularly clever group settled down in the Kulu and Kangra valleys of the Himalayas and made their mark in States like Tehri-Garhwal, Mandi, Sukhet, etc. These "Pahari Painters", as they were called, clung loyally to their traditional art and practised it in its classical style till as late as the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1905, a calamitous earthquake wrought havoc in the valleys and the 'Pahari School' suffered a severe set back. Many of the traditional artists who painted in the indigenous style, finding art itself incapable of assuring them a livelihood, transformed themselves into artisans and craftsmen.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Western art was introduced into India and under Government patronage, schools of art were opened in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The heads of these institutions were mostly English artists and as England at that time did not occupy in the realm of art the first place, compared with other European countries, we did not get the best teachers from the West. Nevertheless, they imparted knowledge and technique, which enabled Indian students to acquire the Western academic outlook in painting.

Thus while in the cities art began to develop in Western style and technique, in the rest of the country, in remote places, including several States, the indigenous artists continued to paint in the traditional style and, strange as it may appear, each was blissfully ignorant of the existence of the other.

This anomalous position did not, however, remain for long. In 1880, Principal Griffiths, by making the first copies of the Ajanta Caves, brought to the notice of the world the glory of ancient Indian art. Later in 1910, Mr. E. B. Havell of the Calcutta School made a bold departure by declaring that Indian traditional art was so rich in style and technique that there was no need to adopt the Western methods for teaching art in this country.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

There is no doubt that the renaissance started in Bengal was eagerly followed by other parts of the country. In Western India, particularly in Gujerat, the development of Indian painting owed much to the efforts of Mr. Raval and Mr. Ahivasi.

Before this period another artist of influence, by name Raja Ravi Varma, gave a different aspect to the movement in Western and Southern India. Raja Ravi Varma's thousands of litho prints, depicting Indian mythological subjects in most realistic styles, were in fact a mixture of Indian subjects painted in western technique. This was followed up by Prof. Dhurandhar and others in Bombay.

Ravishanker Raval hails from Bhavnagar. He was born in 1892 and had his training at J. J. School of Art in Bombay under Principal C. I. Burns. In 1917, he first made his mark in winning the Bombay Art Society's Gold Medal for a picture painted in Jaipur style. It was the first attempt to utilise Indian tradition in Bombay. Since 1919 he has settled down in Ahmedabad and his continuous, sincere and quiet work has been responsible for the development of art in Gujarat. He has contributed perhaps the largest number of illustrations to Gujarati Books and magazines. An illustrated journal called *Vismi Sadi* ("Twentieth Century") run by the Late Haji Mohamad Shivji in 1917, provided a new avenue for featuring paintings and sketches. His pen drawings in the historical novels of Mr. K. M. Munshi are well known. In order to give shape to the movement and to cultivate the taste of the people, he started "Kumar", in 1924, in collaboration with Mr. Bachubhai Ravat. This Gujarati cultural magazine helped to popularise Indian art in Western India by introducing several artists of Gujerat.

In 1936, Mr. Raval toured the Far East and came in contact with some of the best artists of Japan and China. In his "Kala Karni Sanskar Yatra" a travel diary profusely illustrated with his own sketches, he has covered the salient features of the styles of art followed in this country as well as in the Far East. He undertook lecture tours

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

and travelled widely, with the spirit of an enthusiast more eager to learn the best in others than to propagate his own art.

He is very popular as a teacher, as he is always a sympathetic guide to the young artist whose future he shapes. His two paintings, one of Narsinh Mehta and the other of Akkho, the goldsmith philosopher, are both painted in light wash style. He has done several paintings of Meera; saints are his favourite subjects. He is not one to whom we look for masterpieces, but he is undoubtedly one who has contributed much to the revival and development of the art movement in Gujerat.

Mr. Raval's most successful experiments in teaching have been at the art centre he started known as "Gujarat Kala Sangh". Prominent amongst the students who have become frontrank artists are Kanu Desai, Somalal Shah, (whose mud-wall houses and studies of village folk are very pleasing,) and Rasiklal Parikh, a versatile artist who also handles wood-cuts and lino-cuts. J. Mistry, T. Pancholi, Bhikubhai Acharya and Krishnalal Bhatt were also amongst his best pupils.

The second batch of his pupils include Chhaganlal Jadhav, who is a popular landscape artist; Bansi, a successful topical cartoonist and Ravi Shanker Pandit, who has ably illustrated a number of nursery and children's books. Sarita Nanavati, Avantikaben, Bhadra Desai, Shanti Shah, Hiralal Khatri and Chandra Shankar Raval, who have been trained by him, contribute their best continuously to the art exhibitions.

Another institution *Jyoti Sangh*, Ahmedabad, also came into being under his inspiring guidance. It claims Shanta Desai, Ratna Prabha, Kantaben and Shakuntala as artists of promise. Most of Raval's pupils are today painting independently and are keeping alive the trends of Indian painting in Western India.

Among Raval's popular paintings are "Bilav Mangal", "Symphony of Life" and "Bharata and Deer". He made some reconstructed copies of important scenes from Ajanta for the book of His

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Highness Balasaheb, the Chief of Aundh, and has brought out a popular monograph and a study record of his one month's stay at Ajanta.

He has presided over several art and literary gatherings, and through his speeches, writings and paintings, has greatly propagated the cause of Indian art. In his books *Kala Chintan* and *Chitra Shrushti* he has enumerated his own views on art and life.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Raza : Bombay View

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(11)

S. H. Raza

FEW front rank artists in modern India had to struggle their way up as S. H. Raza had to do, and yet he has carved out for himself a place in the field of landscape painting in which few could excel or even equal him.

Born in 1922, at Babaria, in the Central Provinces, with an innate aptitude for art, Raza had his early training in the Nagpur School of Art. He was soon attracted to Bombay, which offered him an almost unlimited field and he slowly worked his way up the ladder to fame in Western India. Though he got his art diploma from the J. J. School of Art only recently, he enjoys a reputation out of all proportion to that yard-stick of merit.

He exhibited his paintings for the first time in Bombay in 1943 and since then he has had something to offer at every show. His one-man exhibition last year was a great success. He received several prizes including a silver medal from the Bombay Art Society in 1948 and a gold medal at the All-India Fine Arts Exhibition held at Nagpur

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

the same year and yet another gold medal at the Calcutta Industrial Exhibition. In the field of commercial art he has done some fine work and has also quite a remarkable collection of clay models to his credit.

Raza justifies his preference for water colour on the plea that it is cheaper and lends itself to easier outdoor painting. Reasons apart, he has translated his partiality for water colour into some specimens truly representative of his reactions to the outside world. Depending more on colour as a vehicle of expression, he splashes on paper in a carefree manner and succeeds in producing the correct atmosphere, as well as the innermost feelings of the subjects he paints.

He creates forms not by outlining colours but by contrasting them. His works always have a refreshing air about them, which arrests the immediate attention of observers. In his quick wash work he just drops colour on the figures and lifts them out or throws them into the background and produces a sense of space. With a bold brush, he is predominantly an impressionist; his colours are vital but his anatomy is weak. He has a great future before him in the field of art in this country.

We miss the linear qualities in his paintings, but the impressions are always striking. There is an unfinished appearance in his works, but that only stirs the imagination of the observer. He is an artist of profundity.

A romantic painter, he selects his subjects from nature but always tries to go beyond it and with an almost poetic penetration he transforms the grey vistas of Bori Bunder or Flora Fountain on a Monsoon day into little rhapsodies in colour and yet retains the intrinsic realism of the subjects. He has a habit of painting landscapes on the spot so as to ensure freshness and spontaneity.

Occasionally Raza gets interested in portrait studies and just now he is engaged on some in oil. Lately he has shown a marked predilection for Indian themes. According to him Indian artists have an inexhaustible field for choosing subjects in this country. He shuns as far as possible mythological subjects because he thinks they induce

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
imitation rather than creative work. He was recently in Kashmir, where he stayed for two months and painted some fine landscape paintings.

An insight into Raza's mind is provided by a little anecdote. While he was in Indore during his peregrinations, of which he is very fond, he was told that the big palace would offer him a good theme for a painting. To his artistic eye, however, the palace was a cubical block in concrete which roused no enthusiasm or interest in him. On his way back he saw a group of Bhangi huts. He promptly opened out his kit and executed some attractive studies.

He believes that the real India is to be found in the villages. Street scenes, poor people's huts and commonplace themes attract him immensely. He loves to travel, and among the places he has visited he liked Rajputana and Central India most. The brilliant sunshine in these places, coupled with the colourful life of the people and their brightly coloured and harmoniously blended costumes have a great fascination for him.

The works of Amrita Sher Gil have left a deep impression on him and among his contemporaries he likes Bendre and Jamini Roy most. Among foreign artists Gauguin's figure studies and Modigliani's colour sense rouse his admiration. Raza has made his mark as a colourist of a high order. He was awarded the Government of India Scholarship for 1949 along with seven others at the Calcutta Art Conference organised by the Central Government.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(12)

Morarji Sampat

AN artist needs but a roof, a crust of bread, and all the rest God gives him in abundance. There are artists in this country who just manage to live on the barest minimum. Their plight is not due to any mistake in the choice of vocation but to lack of support from the public and the State. This is true to a great degree in the case of artist Sampat.

Morarji Sampat was born in a poor family at Jalgaon. Before he learnt to stand on his own he lost his father. As an orphan, he was brought to Bombay, where through the help of donations and charities he secured his early education and training. From such a humble beginning, with none to take any interest in him, he found his way into the group of front rank artists of Western India.

It was in his 18th year that he joined the J. J. School of Art in Bombay, where he studied from 1930 to 1936, and soon after won laurels at the exhibitions held at Calcutta, Bombay and Simla. In those days there was a particular trend running in the styles of art of which he had made a thorough study. He secured several prizes,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Sampat : Shringar

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

including the Griffith Prize. He struck a special note in his painting "Awe Inspired", which now adorns the walls of the Prince of Wales Museum (Bombay). Among those who bought his works at exhibitions were the Maharaja of Patiala, the Hon. Mr. M. R. Jayakar and Mr. Chaturbhuj Gordhandas.

Sampat is out and out a conventionalist. See any of his work and you will immediately recognise this. It is unfortunate that the word "conventional" should have come to be used in a disparaging sense connoting decadent art. In other words, he is following a particular style which a number of other artists also have been following in the past 15 years. What is called progress or decadence in art is really the historical procession of styles.

As artists usually are, Sampat is sentimental. He lives in utter simplicity. Fettered as he was by poverty and toil, painting was the balm of his life. With solitary musings and broodings he painted and laboured his way slowly but steadily. On completion of his studies, the past slowly melted out of his life, the panorama of life was unfolded to him, and the vast unexplored land of dreams came within his reach. Some of his works, done in the enchanting days of youth, are tinged with romance and vibrant with emotional feeling.

Sampat is a sporadic painter. When moved by a theme he paints with devout attention, and then again there is a long blank period. His contemporaries were Yagnesh Shukla and Madhav Satwalekar, who now works silently in Aundh State.

Sampat's works are precise and thoughtful; hence he does not take one by storm. He would not embark upon an adventure with his brush, but would paint with the ease of conventional mannerism. He knows well the enature of colour and its gradations. Being poor he was schooled in the exercise of self-restraint.

Sampat knows well the grammar of the language of art. His eclectic manner of painting is really pleasing and emotionally strong. He paints both in oils and water-colours. His execution is of an academic character, whether it be a portrait, a landscape, a mythological

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

piece or a sentimental composition. His monochrome studies, silhouettes, settings for films, cartoons and ink-wash sketches bear testimony to his familiarity with various branches of art.

Serious works of art have as yet limited gilt-edged value; thus for bread-winning the commercial approach offers relief to the artist, though it does not satisfy his soul. Sampat at times prepares cover-jackets, children's book illustrations, picture post-cards, wedding invitations, Christmas or Divali greeting cards, etc.

Nature abhors a vacuum. For centuries past Indian history records a definite dislike for blank wall-surfaces as proved by village-houses and palaces of any period, which are found gaily decorated. People lived with the murals. Sampat has a special fascination for murals. He handles a mural in any medium, fresco, tempera or oil, and did a huge one — "Departure of Padmini from Chittoor" — in collaboration with Markand Bhatt, another artist of great calibre, now the Principal of the Baroda art school.

His works are easy to comprehend, for he follows the perspective and rotundity of form. He has risen by his sincerity of approach. He has a strong natural bias towards pictorial and anecdotal art. He follows a simplified decorative style. He loves Agra and Fatehpur-Sikri, of which he has made refreshing sketches. His broad colour-sketches of East Kandesh District and Nasik in particular, are also very pleasing.

His "Country Life", a village-home scene, is perhaps his most popular piece, acclaimed as one of the best at the Modern Indian Art Exhibition, held in London in 1934. The late Kaniyalal Vakil, the flamboyant critic, held Sampat's work in great esteem.

Art values cannot be judged by the square inches of paper or canvas employed and hence he would not go after the size, but the subject-matter of painting. Amongst his outstanding paintings are "Devotion", "His Pet", "Yakshakanta", "Vishva-Shanti" and "Shiva's Bereavement". His renderings of Buddha's life-episodes are praiseworthy.

His fine sense of colour manifests itself strongly in his work "Mendi Shiringar" (application of *mendi* — an Indian manicure). It

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

is an attempt in the Rajput style which flourished during the period 1550 to 1900 A.D. Using a fascinating orange-yellow as background, he has interpreted a popular domestic scene of Rajputana in a delightfully decorative manner.

Mythological literature and rituals of religion stimulate his aesthetic sense. For centuries artists have lavished all the wealth of their palettes in relating the life of Krishna. The Pahari or the Kangra Schools have contributed rare masterpieces in this line. From *Bhagwat Puran* (life story of Shree Krishna) artists painted a series of anecdotes for the propagation of the cult of Vaishnavism. The stylistic idiosyncrasies of these devout artists are known the world over. Sampat like his *guru* Jagannath Ahivasi, draws inspiration from Sanskrit classics. In "Makhan-chor" one sees young Krishna with a peacock feather on his head, together with his rustic companions.

In this picture Sampat illustrates the most intimate and popular theme of Krishna's childhood. It is a happy conglomeration of colours and figures. Krishna as *Makhan-chor* (butter-thief) is the hero of nursery stories told by mothers to their children all over the country. Seeing curd and butter kept on a high shelf, Krishna climbs and pulls it down, distributes it, eats some of it and spills or hides the rest. Then the story runs that the *gopis* go and complain to Yasoda. The literature gives us the legends, but it is the brush of the artist that moves our hearts to the significance of the divine pranks of Krishna. When one studies the mysteries of Indian mythology the growing knowledge seems to expand without end !

In "Fakir", Sampat has brought out a common street scene — a blind man bent by years, being led by his wife who is in *purdah*. The bluish atmosphere is deeply suggestive of the evanescent stage of the old fakir's life. Sampat is a pastellist too, but he is at home in wash-method style which helps him to obtain the effects he wants.

Some of his works have exceptionally realistic qualities. He has done several silhouettes and monochromes with characteristic elegance of line. He would not substitute masses for outline, but brings out the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

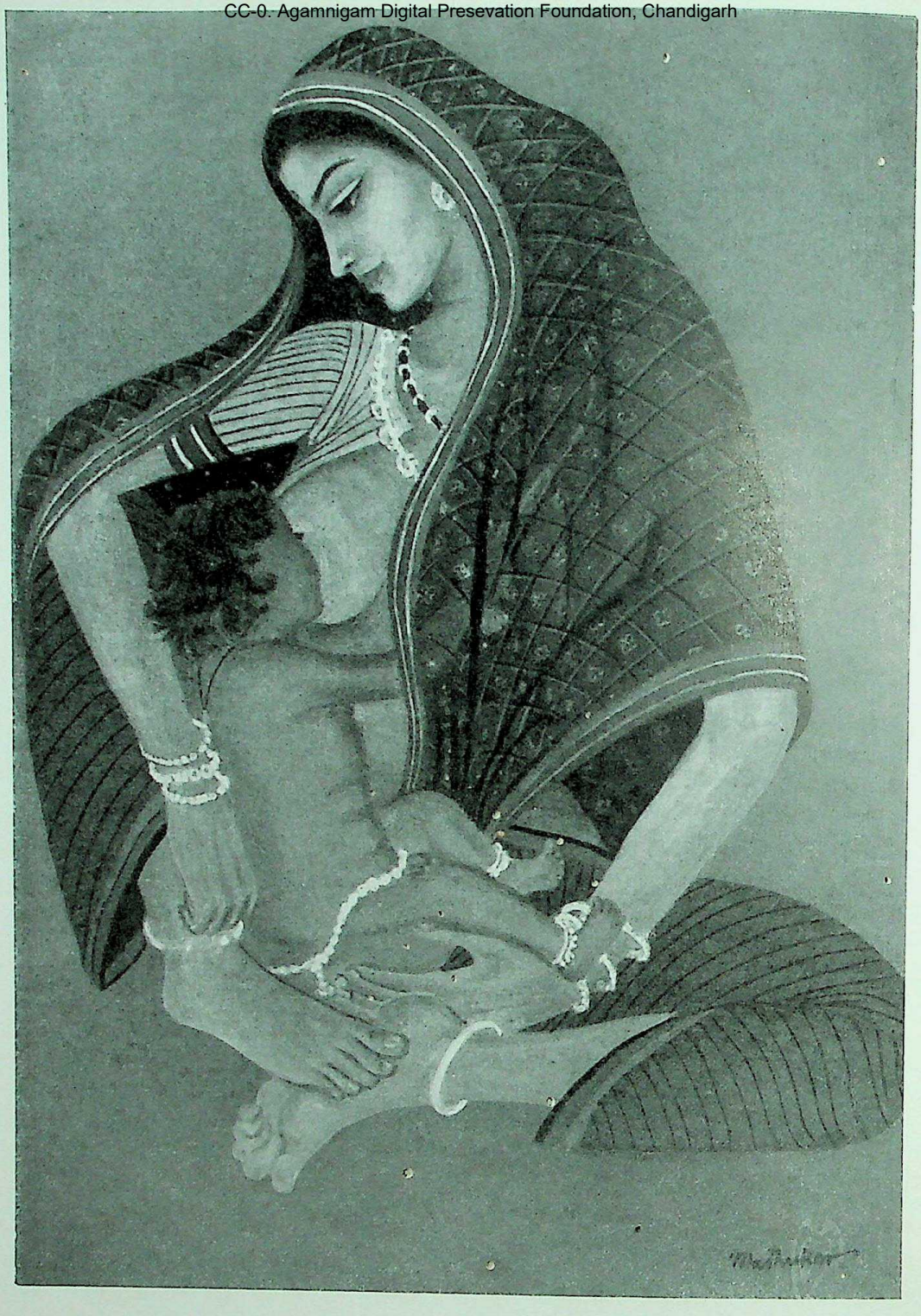
resilient force of line.

Sampat is unsophisticated and shy. His art is delicate, dreamy and tender. Relationship of environment to the spirit of the artist is important and hence once again he is at the art school.

There is a school of thought that believes that the essence of true art lies in the importance of the subject treated. Sampat belongs to that school. He also maintains that art is an activity which should afford pleasure or awaken sympathy in the spectator, thereby, ennobling or elevating his soul. He feels sincerely that works of art widen man's mental horizon.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Seth: Mother

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(13)

Madhukar Seth

MADHUKAR Seth is one of the promising Indian-artists of the progressive group, which hopes to shape the future of Indian art. Though still in his twenties he has achieved a rare command over his brush and palette.

A pupil of Nandalal Bose, Madhukar studied for six years under Master Mashai at Santiniketan and imbibed the spirit essential to an understanding of Indian art. His associates were Prithvish Neogy, Sukhmoy Moitra and Prabhash Sen, along with whom he cherished hopes of achieving something in Indian art. He had his early training under Rabindra Dutta, and later studied the various indigenous arts and crafts at Santiniketan.

After his return from Santiniketan, he settled down in Bombay, working as an independent artist and devoted part of his time in association with Vinayak Pandya and Ravishankar Pandit, in illustrating children's books.

Madhukar's creations have a solid quality as they are painted

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

mostly in opaque colours. He uses an incredibly wide range of Indian red, which seems to be his favourite colour. He also employs various techniques ranging from the suave polish of P. Roy's to the brilliant bold strokes of Rabindra Dutta's.

His subject compositions are of infinite variety—man, birds, beasts, landscapes, all of which seem to come to him naturally. He paints mostly in tempera as he finds oils too heavy a medium for his subtle compositions. In his compositions he leans more to the romantic and dramatic than to the abstract. He has a peculiar fondness for folk arts and rural life subjects, which are clearly amplified in some typical Bengal village life studies.

In his works, such as "Buffaloes" and "Cup of Tea", one can easily perceive a combination of boldness as well as delicacy of line and colour. If one sees all his works, it will be felt that the artist has been more poetic than realistic, stronger in conception than in execution.

He excels also in wood cuts and lino-cuts, which are pleasing for their linear and lyrical qualities. Madhukar has a very pleasant graphic record of the subjects he paints. For some time he continuously painted only trees and animals. He applies white chalk on newspaper sheets and then sketches with black charcoal the subject of his study. His approach is much akin to the Chinese point of view.

'Painting' he says, 'is not just a trick of throwing pigment on canvas but it is a serious and difficult craft, which takes years to master'. He maintains that works of art should convey explicit representation. Rhythm of line and form mean everything to him. One is also struck by the sensitivity of his emotional thought and his craftsmanship of execution. He has done several interesting silhouette-studies and beautiful designs for wedding cards.

Madhukar's landscapes have an originality of their own. Their colour schemes are soft and are in miniature sizes with minute details. The tree-studded hills around Matheran from his favourite subjects. His treatment of mists and clouds is impressive. The light blue skies contrasted with the shimmering greens of the fields and the rocky cliffs

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
surrounded by the clouds are delightful.

He has definite views on theories of painting and on the art of the country. He is of the opinion that works of art should emanate from memory and that the artist must capture the spirit of the subject in his mind first and then record it for his own and others' delectation. By such an imaginative recasting of visual experience, the artist can bring about unusual freshness by providing the familiar in an unfamiliar manner.

He feels that the water-tight division of art by the critics into various 'schools' or 'isms' is unnecessary. So long as a work of art produces an emotion in the spectator, similar to that experienced by the artist himself, the purpose of painting is fulfilled and the work of the artist is done.

He regrets that contemporary art is not given sufficient encouragement. This, he thinks, is due to lack of support both from the Government and Museum authorities, who do not purchase even the best works of well-known artists.

Madhukar believes that the centre of gravity in artistic life should be shifted from cities to villages. He does not want art schools in the hub of the city but in the vicinity of the villages to enable the artists to be in communion with nature and to study rural life, which is so colourful and human.

He thinks that our schools are overcrowded and has a remedy for it. He wants a thorough examination of the student for a period of three to six months by the authorities before allowing him to take up art study for a profession.

"Art," he asserts, "requires specific talent and only those who are talented should be encouraged to pursue the arts seriously. Our standards of art have gone down mainly because the authorities have not been discriminate in their choice of students. The most essential factor in art teaching is the personal relation between the teacher and the pupil. This is possible only with a limited number of students who can work along with the teacher and see him at work and learn with greater advantage.

In the Government—managed schools, we hardly find teachers

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

carrying on their individual work, and that is why they are not keeping pace with the art trends of the country. The ideal art school should be a residential institution through which learners can be in constant touch with each other and can have greater facilities for learning new techniques through comparison of each other's work.

Madhukar complains that historical and cultural backgrounds are seldom taught in our art schools and hence much of our work lacks the Indian spirit. Art appreciation is rarely taught, and seldom do the educational authorities arrange shows of the master-artists in their schools. Good artists prefer to paint on their own rather than to become art teachers. That is because the salary grades are too low to attract them. We need a cleaning up of our art schools if we ever hope to reach the heights of our traditional masters—so feels this young painter.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Shukla: Toilet

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(14)

Yagnesh Shukla

YAGNESH K. SHUKLA, the well known Indian artist, who was sent to China by the Government of India as a Cultural Relations Scholar in Art, has just returned after 18 months' stay in that country. He has brought with him a veritable treasure of Chinese art, valuable impressions of the art life in that ancient land, and a diploma in Chinese painting from the Peiping National Institute of Fine Arts. From this trip he has further enriched his knowledge and proficiency in the realm of art for he had previously studied the techniques of mural painting, etching, and interior decoration at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Rome. He has thus become one among the few Indian artists who can claim to have studied various phases of both Western and Oriental art.

Soon after his arrival in Bombay from China, I had occasion to visit his studio at Vile Parle. Over a cup of Chinese tea, he narrated to me his experiences in China, and while listening to him I also glanced through several Chinese scrolls, executed by him in the traditional

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

"Hsieh-i" technique. I should perhaps explain what this technique is. There are two distinct techniques in Chinese painting—"Hsieh-i", meaning "the writing of an idea" and "Kung-pi", representing detailed work. The latter developed, like Moghul art in India, as decorative painting, mostly confined to the Courts. "Hsieh-i" developed freely all over the country.

According to Mr. Shukla, the Indan artist can learn much from China, especially in the field of brush-work. This aspect of art in China, he explained, implied not only line but also tone. The strokes made with the brush have to show strength as well as smoothness. The execution has to be rapid and the colours being fast and permanent, there can be no dilly-dallying with them—dilution, erasure or correction is impossible. This is a type of painting that is naturalistic, stylised and abstract in certain sense of the term, for it is never a finished product. The artist has to control the rhythm of the brush, for "the spirit of the painting is in the tip of the brush".

Subtle variations of tone as in the picture known as "Notan", in Japan, where this style is much in vogue, are its chief characteristics. And it has to be executed in monochrome only, viz., in Chinese black ink.

That does not, however, mean a monotonous black and white study, as an artist trained in European technique might imagine, nor just a graphic art. To Chinese painters different shades of black ink are sufficient to produce the effect of colour. They claim that their ink gives impressions of six "colours"—black, white, dryness, richness, thickness and thinness. To provide relief, light colours are also used at times, but never to convey their splendour of warmth, as seen in Mr. Shukla's study of a Buddhist Monastery.

Mr. Shukla held successful exhibitions of his paintings in Peiping and Nanking. He showed Indian traditional style paintings, Italian etchings and also his studies of Chinese life, covering Buddhist monks, Lamas, priests, and landscapes, pagodas, lamp-festivals, portraits and landscapes. His works were highly commended in Chinese art circles.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Dr. Hu Shih, Head of the National Peiping University, on seeing his Chinese paintings, observed. "In a short time, he has achieved notable results with Chinese brush and ink." All his works were either in black ink or water colours.

For over 1,000 years or more, Chinese literature has devoted volumes to seasons, trees and flowers. Chinese poets have written on "the moods of a bamboo tree", "wailings of a willow-tree" and probed into the mysteries of nature. They have associated almost everything with trees and seasons. One of the reasons for this may be that the seasons are more acutely felt there. Mr. Shukla prefers to call a Chinese farmer's head-study "Autumn", when the willow was casting away its leaves and the man was in his old age.

Bird and animal studies form a subject by themselves, and the artist has to make a deep study by developing intimacy with them. Mr. Shukla undertook such a study, rearing the birds in his house and studying their movements. His acquired strength of brush-work and effortless success in rapid execution are well illustrated in his two works, "Horse" and "Cock and Hen." The cock is the symbol in Chinese literature for four qualities: magnanimous personality, fighting nature, ceaseless activity and majestic gait.

The average Chinese has a highly developed art-sense; this is because everyone writes there with a brush. The artist is not regarded as an exclusive member of the community but as one who has mastered the use of "brush-pen". A good painting is beautiful penmanship. The Chinese artist does not paint on a standing easel. He stands or sits and paints on the table just the way one writes. They call it "writing a picture", and they have a thorough training before they exhibit or expect to sell their paintings. The dictum is "one must paint the subject at least a thousand times for practice before one exhibits or sells". It may be just a study of a horse or a crow or a few leaves or blossoms. But the artist must practice the same to perfection. The picture has also got to be signed and sealed by the artist. He must say something about the subject of the picture or write a poem and all this must form a part of

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

the picture's composition.

A picture is not considered complete until the scroll is mounted. Mr. Shukla believes that Chinese art has been kept alive because of these long scrolls, which are easy to preserve. Almost every house, every restaurant and even working places have their walls covered by beautiful scrolls.

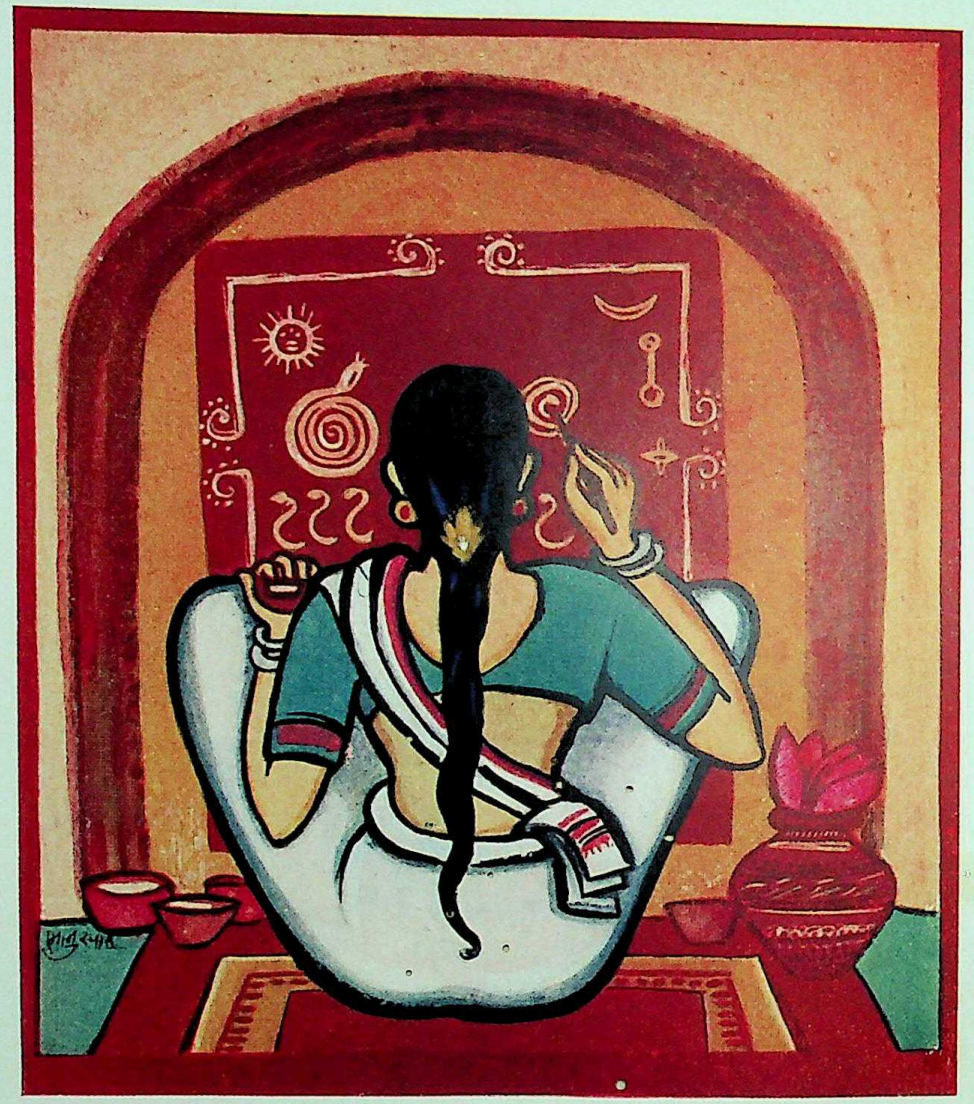
Mr. Shukla thinks that there is a lot of common background for both Indian and Chinese art. In the earliest Chinese treatises on painting, one comes across the same six essentials known in Indian art as *Sadanga*, "the six limbs of painting". The Chinese artists lay the same emphasis that an Indian traditional artist does on the two fundamental principles—rhythm and spirit, i.e., *laya* and *bhav*. Both paint from memory and use objects merely as elements in spiritual experience, while tone and swirl of line denote musical mood. In this idealistic type of aesthetics, correctness of physical representation, perspective or light and shade, assume little importance. Both are creative since for them painting proceeds from the mind, and rhythmic vitality is the chief objective.

To my query as to the influence of Western art in China, Mr. Shukla replied: "Only since the last two generations has there been a marked influence of the West, Whereas in India our traditional styles have weakened; the Chinese have been able to retain theirs very well. This is primarily because they take a complete training in their own traditional art first. Lately a new school of painting has developed which employs all the modern methods, emphasises the scientific study of life and nature, and has thereby revitalized their own art. Amongst the Chinese painters of today, Professor Ju Peihung, who taught me, enjoys a unique position. The Grand old Chi Pai-Shih, whom I had the pleasure to meet, though now 88, still continues to paint. He can rank amongst the world's best artists."

Mr. Shukla toured extensively the interior districts, seeing Chinese village-life and visiting ancient monuments. He is the richer today as an artist because of this visit to China.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Bhanu Smart : Nag Panchami

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(15)

Bhanu Smart

NO education is complete unless it includes the study of art. Art, however, is not just drawing or painting, but implies the appreciation of aesthetic values. Babu Smart is one of those who have endeavoured to study the problems of child art education. For the past ten years he has been an art teacher in the Modern School, Bombay. Child art, he thinks, corresponds very nearly to primitive art in its simple approach and sense of colour. He holds that as a child grows and learns to differentiate between right and wrong, he feels shy to draw spontaneously. It is the function of schools to provide an inspiring atmosphere in art classes and art should occupy a definite place in the curriculum. As a teacher, Bhanu Smart enters into the spirit of the child.

Bhanu Smart was born in Rajkot. His childhood was spent in Surat, until he was ten. Then he came to Bombay. At an early age he took to sketching and was ambitious to become an artist. The continuous support and encouragement given by his elder brother, Mr. M. D. Smart, enabled him to take to art. He had his training at

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

the J. J. School of Art. After having obtained his diploma in 1934 he came under the direct influence of the Dutt brothers in Bombay. His fondness for and success in the sphere of Indian art are also due to his first lessons under Sjt. Ahivasi. Feeling it necessary to study the art trends of Bengal he spent a year at Shantiniketan.

He has thus gone through three distinct phases, the typical School of Art training, then a short period at Santiniketan, and finally his own unattached approach to art.

Smart is jovial by nature and a man of social type. He is reckoned a front ranker among Gujerat Artists. Possessed of a fascination for village toys, which he collects from different parts of the country, he has a huge collection of terra cotta and wooden village toys of Marwar, Gujerat & Bengal. His *dhinglis* of Udaipur, animals of Mewar and toy gods of Surat form a colourful ensemble. He considers the village craftsman's approach to form and colour as psychologically correct, for children like them immensely. In primitive colour and form, these village toys are proofs of the artistic instinct of the villagers. Usually the city-made toys are over-finished products with which a child seldom feels at home. He thinks that village toys as a cottage industry should be encouraged.

Smart made his first hit in the wash method style, but for some years he has stuck to tempera. He believes that medium and treatment are totally dependent upon the subject-matter that is painted. To him the material or the medium does not matter but he attaches importance to the theme that is to be expressed.

He maintains that in the teaching of art the gradual coordinated development of the pupil's eye, brain and hand is necessary. Development of any one faculty alone results in dissatisfaction, owing to the child's inability to express clearly what he understands.

Smart's work has vitality and stirring qualities that appeal to the observer at once. He reduces his line and forms to the minimum simplicity and never attempts heavily loaded compositions. Simple in execution, his paintings have a refreshing originality of approach.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

He paints from 'memory' and gives imagination free play. He does not care at all for models; he has never taken to portraiture or still-life. With ingenuity he has produced a good variety of fairy-tale compositions for children. His illustrations of books for children are praiseworthy.

He has received several prizes at exhibitions in Simla, Bombay and Calcutta. One of his best works "Abhisarika" is included in Kalyanji Karamsi's collections. His "Mother", which won him a silver medal at the Bombay Art Society's annual exhibition, was chosen for the Royal Academy's exhibition in London. By effortless grey and black strokes, relieved only by pink or red, he gives it a vital strength.

His outstanding feature is execution through joy rather than elaborate methodology. He would not attempt too familiar or too prosaic a scene, which, for him, lacks the necessary poetic qualities. His "Bullock cart", "Horse Play", "Ras Nirtya", all display his fondness for folk art and his aptitude for motion. He does not just suggest movement but subtly reveals it. Several of his large size compositions portray the idea of movement. His Moghul style picture, in wash method, illustrating Shah Jahan's vision of the Taj at the death bed of Mumtaz, was acclaimed as one of his best. He made a particular study of the Warlis, a village tribe of Dahanu. Fishermen, woodcutters, and farmers have been the subjects of his recent compositions.

He seldom paints in oils. His famous piece 'Dance' is in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay. His picture 'Nagpanchami' won him high praise for its rhythmic lines at a recent exhibition. He thought of 'Nagpanchami' six years ago, but painted it only six months back. He rarely picks up a story from mythology, but when he does, he executes it perfectly, like his recently done colourful panel 'Dan-lila'. He likes to paint rural life scenes; for him India's villages offer plenty of material. He does not paint on the spot, nor when impressed by an idea; he lets the idea linger in his head, perhaps for years, and then starts on the picture. He feels that every artist is more or less in the experimental stage until he is fifty and only at that age has the artist matured his conception of art and then can create or adopt

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

a definite style.

Three of Smart's well-known paintings are:

"Queen Yashodhara" is seen dejected, having learnt of the abrupt departure of the prince Siddartha. She is seen looking eagerly from the Palace balcony for any trace of her lord. This is a piece for mural decoration.

"Child at play" is, perhaps, the most convincing proof of his interest in children and toys.

"Santhal Village Scene" depicts a Santhal village in Birbhum District, Bengal. This village scene is in the typical Shantiniketan style.

His recently painted "Matheran Landscapes" carry a refreshing note. One perceives in them a steady quality of repetitive rhythm. He has made some interesting points of departure in painting these with bright colours and loose impasto, not too far removed from expressionism.

At times he creates decorative surface patterns bearing strong, sometimes almost violent, emotional qualities. His sensitivity for design is well expressed in his 'Mahasweta'. He paints in water-colours and prefers to work on hand-made Nepalese paper.

The most formative years of the child's growth are usually spent in schools and with teachers. Scribbling is most natural to the child, as in the adolescent stage one becomes more cautious of one's emotions, visions and environments and the limitations of one's own ability for expression. Young children draw naturally, they have a natural impulse to express themselves in graphic form. Smart says a child is usually afraid to paint mountains, and so when it paints them it does so in hideous black. When encouraged to express their ideas, children show a complete absorption in their work and give vent to their hidden creative powers. Ask a child to draw a table and he draws four straight vertical lines and one horizontal over them; that is his table. Ask him to sketch a profile, and he draws both the eyes! He draws what is usually thought to exist and not what is seen from a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

particular angle or position.

Smart has made a deep study of the methods required in art education. He feels that up to the age of twelve, the child should be given an absolutely free hand to develop his creative powers. Then he should be taught the grammar of art and again left free to create what he likes. The difficulty is that in most schools art-grammar is over stressed from the beginning so that the child finds little pleasure. In language do we not start with nursery rhythms and short stories before going on to grammar?

Smart is now 38, in the heyday of his career. He is an active member of the Child Art Society, the Gujarat Kala Mandal and the Art Society of India. He is also a member of the Art Education for Schools Committee, which has lately submitted its findings to the Bombay Government. When the recommendations of this Committee are implemented, the teaching of art in Bombay Province will undergo a radical change.

Smart is unexplosive but progressive; he has that cross-sectional immunity few artists possess. He has a consistent conscious philosophy stimulated by an open mind and an almost missionary enthusiasm. He is non-academic in outlook and yet is not revolutionary. He does not suffer from inflexible stylistic limitations.

The diversity of style and composition, from the realistic to the romantic, has brought him to the forefront. He is a genuine and sincere artist. He seldom fails to exhibit at the annual shows and paints continuously though not much in quantity.

The artistic credo of cubism and abstract art has no appeal to him, for he gives priority to human emotions and inward reactions. Only through expression the artist becomes creative in the highest sense and expresses fully the spiritual, emotional and the visionary world within himself.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

PART TWO

G. VENKATACHALAM

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

To
MOOLJI SETH and BHABIBEN
With affection

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Manishi Dey : Reverie

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(1)

Manishi Dey

ALL arts are specialised knowledge but not all artists are specialised men. The lives and achievements of some of the foremost artists of the world confirm this paradox. Rabindranath became an immortal poet without an adequate knowledge of the ABC of prosody; Pavlova was born with rhythm in her soul before she was shaped into a Ballerina; Cezanne never went to a school of art to master the technique of painting; he gave a new technique to the art of painting.

There are artists who paint first and leave a tradition and technique behind them. There are also artists who take infinite pains to become one. Some artists are born; some are made; and some imagine themselves to be artists. The born artists are rare and few.

Manishi Dey is an artist of the first category; he was a born painter. He would have been one even if he had been born in the gutter; as it was, he was born in an artistic family. His early environments too were ideal for the full flowering of his genius, for he was literally brought up on the lap of Gurudev Tagore and in the environs of Santiniketan.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

His childhood companions, an elder brother and sister, were both gifted artists; his first art master was the great A. N. Tagore. He ate and played with budding artists; he joked and laughed with light-hearted geniuses — but not light-headed or light-minded. He grew up in the company of sages, scholars and students. What more an art student could wish for?

But Manishi Dey never allowed any of these to influence his life or art even as a student. He admired them and was even fond of them, but he grew up after his own fashion and developed an individuality of his own both as man and artist.

"My mother fed me with her milk but I never tried to become like my mother; my brother taught me to paint but I never attempted to be like him", he would say in his quaint illogical way. "Even Gurudev failed to reform my life and what chances have these lesser men to improve my art," he would brag when admonished for his reckless ways of life and art.

He was the despair of the family as a child, who brooked no restraint, submitting himself to no discipline. Even now, in his prime manhood, he is still the erratic self-willed character he was as a boy. He was always a rebel.

But, nevertheless, he is the beloved vagabond among the younger generation of Indian artists. Though his first teacher was Abanindranath Tagore and later was taught by Nandalal Bose at Santiniketan, he is not the typical product of the so-called Neo-Bengal School, like Kshitin Mazumdar or Suren Kar.

His earlier student-day works did certainly reveal something of the influence of his teachers but he soon struck out a path for himself; in fact, he struck several paths at the same time. The real fact is that he never studied painting seriously; he merely played with it. Art was not so much a passion as a plaything with him.

Like all born geniuses he painted only when he felt the impulse to paint or the urge to do something; and when in that mood he produced pictures by the dozens, in different styles and on varieties of

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

subjects. There was never any method in his madness. Often he did not know what he was going to paint, had not the least idea of the subject or the media. They never bothered him.

I have seen him play endless tricks with his brush and colours; and transform a lovely landscape into a beautiful bashful maiden by clever manipulations and dexterous wash-methods. There was a period in his life when he did nothing but such tricks, and loved doing them.

He painted as erratically and recklessly as he lived. Often he would finish a picture with much patience and skill, and in a frenzied moment or mood tear it to bits or present it to the first visitor. Tomorrow never troubled his conscience; today was all that mattered to him. He would give away a fine masterpiece for just a snack or a drink.

He lived a vagabond's life with no fixed home or address; happy, care-free and friendly; here today, there tomorrow, and ever at home with everybody. He has been lucky in his friendship. The first friend who tried to put him on his feet was the late Jal Nowroji of the Tatas. He encouraged Manishi Dey to become a commercial artist with the result that he soon set a new standard for advertisement designs, and his poster-pictures became the rage of that kind of art in the country.

His delightfully delicate studies of the different types of Indian Womanhood had an infinite charm of their own and were much in demand. The late Dhurrandar's similar studies of Indian women seemed such poor caricatures when compared with Manishi Dey's. He designed attractive posters not only for the Tatas but for the B.B.&.C.I. Railway and several textile mills and factories.

This was only a passing phase in his career, the only lucrative career in his life, and a phase he was not happy about. He had to struggle hard within himself and curb his rebellious nature, but soon broke away from this "humiliation of selling his soul to eke out a living", and preferred to starve and spend nights in the streets under lamp posts, but happy within himself.

Commercial art was not his metier, though he turned out to

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

be the most successful one in that line, for his heart was not in it naturally. His best creative efforts were what one might call (to appear learned in art criticism, according to some nit-wits) his South Indian period, his Bombay and Gwalior periods. In the South Indian period he played with forms and colours and went on experimenting in tempera and water colour. He sketched from life and nature and produced a series of lovely Indian maidens in different moods and poses; some of which he did in Bangalore when he was the guest of the present writer. He was clever at catching the subtle moods of maidens, and in a thousand and one pictures he has revealed their elusive nature.

It was his Bombay period that was the most fruitful when he showed to the world the unsuspected depths of his art and genius. It was not due to any outer influence or contact with the art of Western India but owing to some inner psychological changes in his life as the result of his close association with friends who understood the artist and who sympathetically encouraged him to fulfil himself in his own way.

During this period he painted profusely, big and small pictures, in different media and on varieties of themes. Some of his best were snatched away by friends before he finished them, and now may be seen in the collections of the late Mr. Nowroji, Mr. J. M. Dani of Nalanda Publications, Mr. F. Moreas of the Times and others. He preferred tempera-method in this period, and a fine example of his work is his "Toilet", a delightful study in warm tones and delicate lines. It is a little gem worthy to adorn any art gallery. "The Devotee" is a fine line drawing with full of sensitive feeling and spiritual sentiment.

In his so-called Gwalior period, he started experimenting in the most unorthodox manner as to shock even the most ultra-moderns and produced some of his best and matured works. In these paintings you see his real individual uniqueness and his genius to play with forms and colours without in any way making them ugly or repulsive or puzzling as most moderns do. Abstract art does not mean abstraction

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

to idiocy or individual idiosyncracy, with no meaning, sense, coherence or beauty. A good number of these paintings has been secured by Mr. M. S. Randhawa of Delhi and are now kept in the Pusa Research Institute library. "Freedom", "Monkeys", "Brides" are among the most outstanding paintings in this collection.

Manishi Dey is still young, full of fire, vitality and burning imagination and can yet achieve greater things as a painter. His assignment to decorate the Indian Embassy in Moscow did not materialise for the simple reason that he is not the artist to submit himself meekly to official instructions, direction and orders. He might protest at every step and even leave the work half-finished if there were too much interference and too many restrictions. It is probable also that given the freedom to choose his own subjects for the murals and his own way of executing them he would make a fine job of it.

Of all the younger generation of artists in this country, Manishi is certainly one of the most gifted, original and daring, and with a little more self-discipline on his part, a more sympathetic understanding of his genius from the public and a large dose of luck from kindly fate, he is sure to find his place among the first dozen, front rank painters of India.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(2)

Pulin Behari Dutt

"WHAT do you think of modern art, Mr. Shaw?" asked one of his friends. "What do I think of modern art? Well, considering that I have practised it for over sixty years there must be something good and decent about it," replied that great jester, in the grand manner of G.B.S.

Pulin Behari Dutt's art is modern in that Shavian sense. There is something "good and decent" about his art as about his life. He has not the usual airs or poses of artists with multiple complexes and frustrated ideas and ambitions. There is a lot of bunk about art, these days.

Pulin Dutt is an "artist who is not a special kind of man, but a man who is a special kind of artist". He is a simple man who has not overburdened himself with any learned theories about art, with no superior claims to any subjective idiosyncrasies and no confused values of persons and things, but an artist who paints after the accepted style and manner of his country's art.

Art is not psychological exhibitionism—great and enduring

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Pulin Dutt : Buddha

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

art is not that at any rate — and art in India has long been considered as merely a path to self-realization through self-expression. But self-expression of what? Obviously, self-expression of all that is good, true and beautiful in man. Not his follies, foibles and fancies. These have nothing to do with creative self-expression. They are often only excretions, emotional aberrations, mental make-beliefs.

Pulin Dutt is a sincere artist. Whatever may be the subject he paints, whether it be the spiritual beauty of a Buddha or the ecstasy of a god-intoxicated Meera or the simple unsophisticated beauty of a Santal girl, he does it with the devotion of a consecrated life, of dedicated purpose.

The glitter and glamour of the "show-world" have no attraction for him. He is too serious a man and too genuine an artist to fall a victim to them.

He started painting early in life and under the guidance of a great master, Abanindranath Tagore. His best works are still those he painted in the company of his *guru*. Not that he has not progressed in his art, but that he was precocious even at that age.

"The few that I have painted," he says, "have come out of the intensity of feeling and they claim the closest relations with my heart."

He paints after the best Indian style and tradition; and in the fine sensitive line, soft subdued colour and clever brush work one can trace the influences of the arts of Ajanta, Rajput and some of the modern masters. There is in Dutt's art not only the lyrical sweetness of the Orient but the strength and vigour of the Occident. And to that extent he is a modern with an eclectic taste like that of his own master.

Dutt's paintings may not have the rich harmony of colouring, the charm of decorative composition and the exquisitely flawless technique of some of his compeers, like Kshitin Mazumdar or K. Venkatappa, but they certainly possess the lofty idealism, the lively imagination and the sure mastery of design of any one of them.

"Siddhartha and Yasodhara", "Asoka", "The Buddha as a

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Mendicant", "Meera", "Festive Day" and "Panihari" are some of his characteristic works.

An exile from Bengal, he made Bombay his home and teaching art his profession. An ideal art master, he does not impose his style or ideas on his young pupils but helps them, silently and unobstrusively to express themselves. He never gives them any model to copy from or even suggests a subject.

They as a rule choose their own subject, paint, draw or sketch in their own ways, and when they have finished, he comments upon them and discusses with them their relative merits.

He is proud of their mistakes, because, according to him, as according to all intelligent observers, correct perspective in a child's drawing is unnatural and not true as the child's vision is often different than that of the adult. The aim of a teacher should be to bring out the "self-expression" in the child; and Dutt is a born teacher.

It is as the inspirer and founder of the Child Art Society in Bombay that he will be long remembered and appreciated.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Gandhi: Rajgir

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(3)

Dhiren Gandhi

RUPAYATAN at Vile Parle, near Bombay, is an interesting art institution run by the Gandhi brothers. It is dedicated to Gandhian ideals in life and art. Its motto is SERVICE. It has no capital, no official patronage, no public support. Youthful enthusiasm and love of service have been its two main pillars of support during its existence for the last five years, and it is growing from strength to more strength.

In this institution young children in the neighbourhood, who show a taste for the arts and crafts, are taught free to learn and produce beautiful objects of art. Love and not profit is the ideal put before the youngsters who come to learn there.

The two young Gandhis, who founded this art centre, are the grand-nephews of the Mahatma, who loved and brought them up as his own children. They learnt to lisp their first syllables on his lap and it was he who encouraged them to take to the fine arts and had them sent to Ahmedabad first to learn the rudiments of drawing under Ravishankar Raval and later to Santiniketan to study painting under

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Nandalal Bose.

Dhiren Gandhi, the younger of the two, proved a more promising pupil as a painter, while the elder, Navin Gandhi, took seriously to the crafts. Dhiren today is the art master of Rupayatan and Navin is the inspirer and organiser. A talented sister, who has given her life for the service of the poor, completes the trinity of their little cosmos.

Ancient Saurashtra was the home of the fine arts in the golden periods of Indian history; her temple architecture, stone and wood carvings and colourful textiles have been famous throughout the world and are some of the priceless heritage of this country.

Modern Saurashtra, though fallen on evil days so far as creative achievements are concerned, has still been able to produce some promising young artists who wish to revive their past glory and on that build a new and glorious Saurashtra. To this small band of spirited pioneers belongs Dhiren Gandhi.

Like his other compatriots in the field of art, Ahivasi, Somalal Shah, B. N. Jija, L. Merh, Rasiklal Parikh, Kanu Desai and Banu Smart, Dhiren is a traditionalist in his ideal and style, and like them he has resisted the temptation to be a "modern."

His early years at Santiniketan and his training under Nandalal Bose have given him a deeper understanding of true culture, and he is happy to paint in the age-old manner of his country's art. Dhiren is rightly proud of his rich heritage, and the ancient ideals of his country's art are good enough for him. In fact, he is fanatical about it, even as some of the moderns are about theirs.

Dhiren Gandhi's two portfolio of sketches and drawings of the Mahatma reveal not only the mind and moods of a great soul but the artist's own sensitive feeling and delicate draughtsmanship. For one of his age and experience—for he is only 25—they are highly creditable achievements. His pencil work is soft and fine and his lines are strong and sure.

In a recent issue of the Illustrated Weekly, four of Dhiren Gandhi's paintings, works of his student-days, were reproduced, and in

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

spite of the marked influence of Nandalal Bose on his art, especially in the treatment of the subjects and the mannerism of the style, there is a definite, individual character in each one of them.

"The Tired Travellers" has a lyrical appeal, (though a commonplace subject and a scene daily to be seen on the Indian roads) suggestive of the young artist's sincerity and personality. "Buddha at Rajagriha" (reproduced here) and "Shakuntala" are in the best traditions of Santiniketan and have an emotional appeal as delicate as a song sung at sunset hour. A masterpiece in art need not necessarily be a large canvas or a laboured effort or a mystifying theme. More often a simple stroke results in a masterpiece, and oftener a masterpiece is a fluke.

Dhiren is gentle, unassuming and affectionate. His one big dream in life is to live up to the ideals of Bapuji — almost a superhuman task—and one cannot but help wishing him the rich, albeit partial, fulfilment of his dreams.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(4)

Gopal Ghosh

HAVING recognised his gift for painting when he was a child, I advised Gopal Ghose to visit various places in India and to draw pencil sketches of scenery and temples. I am happy to find that he has produced a number of sketches as a result of his wanderings since he started from the Madras Art School. He has an extraordinary gift for drawing and would have obtained recognition if he were in Western countries. He deserves a travelling scholarship. With all my heart I wish him well.

The above was not a mere tribute to a rising genius in painting, Gopal Ghose, from a great master, Abanindranath Tagore. It was more a parting blessing, in the old traditional way of *ashram* education, from a *guru* to his *chela.* "Go forth and fulfil thy *dharma* to the best of thine abilities whatever may be the *karma* in store for thee". With such blessings Kaccha and Shakuntala left their respective *ashrams* to go out into a wider world. With a similar blessing Gopal Ghose left the portals of his art school when he started his wandering life all over India.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Gosh : After Bath

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Gopal Ghose richly deserves this blessing, and what is more, has proved worthy of that blessing. He has even done one better. He has not only drawn delicate sketches in pencil of temples and sceneries but has produced quite a mass of sensitive brush drawings of nature's moods, men's vagaries, and the little vanities of bird and animal life. With a few sure strokes of his brush he has caught on his paper the strutting vanity of a peacock, the pride of a cooing pigeon, the liveliness of some chattering bird, the craftiness of crows, the nimble jumps of monkeys and the grace of prowling cats.

The chief appeal of his drawings is their vitality and simplicity. Although he represents no fixed school, either ancient or modern, his subjects with their clean spaces and swift brevity of line recall the eloquent brushwork of classical China and at the same time the fluid linear mobility of a modern like Gaudier-Brzesca, particularly in his lively studies of animals. This eclectic originality is a welcome break-away from the standardisation of conventionalism, and reveals a true artist, which Gopal Ghose is.

Gopal Ghose hails from West Bengal, is thirty five, married, and is one of the leading lights of the Calcutta Group of Painters. To this set belongs Rathin Moitra, Pran Krishna Pal, Probesh Sen, Niron Mazumdar and P. Das Gupta, the sculptor. Some of them are ultra-modern and have their inspirations from elsewhere. Though their life is rooted in India their art seeks nourishment from alien sources. They have only a patronising attitude towards the traditional art of their country, and in their burning passion to be "modern", "progressive" and "individualistic" they at times overdo things and their art results in poor pale reflections of others. It is foolish to try to jump out of one's own skin, however thrilling the idea may be. Nevertheless, some of these young rebels are gifted artists.

Gopal Ghose's career as an artist is briefly told. He is not the product of one school or one master. He first studied at Jaipur under Sailendranath Dey, an old pupil of Santiniketan; later he came under the influence of A. N. Tagore and Nandalal Bose; and it was

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
in Madras and under the guidance and instruction of Deviprasad Roychoudhry, he blossomed into a painter of promise. He passed out of the Madras School of Arts with distinction and full of promise. After considerable wanderings, he has now settled down in Calcutta as a free lance artist. His paintings have won for him immediate recognition as an artist with a great future and as a "Romantic among Modern Indian Painters."

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Khatau : Indian Ballet

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(5)

Abhay Khatau

WHAT is genius? It is hard work or heredity? Or, is it memory? It may be any one of these or all put together, and even something more. Genius cannot easily be defined or explained. There are geniuses who take "infinite pains" to become one; there are others who inherit it from their parents or from the family. There is a third category which could only be explained by "memory," memory, of course, of past efforts and achievements, even of past attempts and failures. This presupposes past existence and memory of past life or lives. There is nothing new or strange in this idea or belief; more than half of the human race have believed in it since the dawn of human mind; and most great thinkers and artists have intuitively accepted it.

For how can one intelligently explain a phenomenon like Abhay Khatau, the boy-painter, who took the art world of India by storm a few years ago? He was hardly eighteen when he held a "one-man" exhibition of his works in Bombay and compelled recognition as "a new phenomenon in the world of art" from critics and connoiseurs. In sheer number

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
alone it was one of the largest ever seen in Bombay; the variety of themes presented and the richness of the styles and techniques seen baffled both art students and laymen. Puzzle and amazement gripped the visitors; academicians and art teachers stood dumb before those astonishing attempt of a boy-genius.

For genius he certainly was, there was no doubt. Only a born genius could have produced that freakish art which, both in form and content, revealed unsuspected depths of creative genius. And whence this genius? Abhay Khatau had no need to work hard for anything, much less for art, for he was born rich, enormously rich. His heredity is of a different kind, for he comes from a business community noted for commercial enterprise. Though wealth has given this progressive caste a certain amount of taste for appreciating art and beauty, it has not produced any outstanding creative thinkers or artists. Abhay is a rare exception.

Abhay, the only son of his father, was born in 1927, and had his early education as a child in Western lands. As a boy, he preferred paints to books and spent his childhood days scribbling, drawing, sketching and painting. The instinct to play with colours seems to have born with him and his boyhood dreams found fantastic shapes in lines and colours as he played with his brush. Some of them were wild and wierd, like the masterpieces of the "moderns" and some were incredibly conventional and sophisticated like the works of academy trained painters. Even now, in his matured works, this unbalanced character, this uneven nature, is to be seen.

As a child, he was too precocious, especially where art was concerned; and when he was taken to Europe at a very early age for treatment and education, the genius in him sprouted overnight like some tropical flower which blossoms into full fragrance and beauty at the magic touch of the cool moonbeams. It was lucky he was born rich; struggle for life might have smothered his budding genius. His extensive travels in Europe enriched his mind and heart, and he reacted to his boyhood environments in a wonderful way. His soul began to expand

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

under the influence of European music, and the opera had a special fascination for him.

Abhay is essentially a musician first—though he never made any serious attempt to become one—and a painter next. His paintings are visual music; they are more coloured rhapsodies than picture compositions. He hears sounds before he sees colours,—so I imagine—and all his efforts at painting are mere translation of sound notes into colour notes. His colours pulsate with tones and his paintings are musical patterns in line and colour. His compositions are not so rhythmical as symphonic and structural, a distinct character of Western music. For an Indian, he is very European in his art. Even his Indian themes have a Western outlook and treatment. He is a paradox and a puzzle, like his pictures.

Rich as is his art, it is quaint in many respects. There is definitely an abnormality about his art, as there was about William Blake and his drawings, and in Khatau's weird compositions and riotous colourings we see, as in Blake's, suggestions and intimations of deeper consciousness and other worlds of forms and colours. It is good that he was allowed to grow after his own desires without strict schooling or discipline, for that would have been the death of the creative artist in him. He was lucky not only in his parents, who encouraged him to develop along his own aesthetical way, but also in his art master, Pulin Dutt, who never attempted to impose his style or method on his pupil but handled him gently as Confucius would his followers—leave them severely alone.

Abhay Khatau is as daring and reckless in his imagination as he is unconventional and unfettered in his art. He has no fear of any "isms", "schools", "styles" or techniques. He refuses to be labelled or catalogued as either this or that. He wants to be himself, paint as he likes, grow like a flower, natural, free and direct. His "god-given" instinct and talent find their natural expression in dreaming and painting, and he has an immense quantity of pictures to his credit. His themes range from a bursting bud to a solar eclipse; he paints portraits with the same gusto as he paints a big opera scene; a *prima donna* with all her paraphernalia interests him as much as a naked fakir. He paints women in moods and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
nature in rage, with the same detached emotion, as he paints a sun-lit valley or a gorgeous monsoon sky. To him subject matter is as interesting as "patterning"; and he is at home with abstract art as he is with decorative art. His genius is versatile and brooks no restraint or limitation. He handles both oils and water colour with the same ease and mastery of a trained artist; and his pictures glow with an unearthly light and beauty.

Young Khatau is an interesting study in psychology both as man and artist. For one born rich, he is extremely democratic and unaffected. He lives a simple life with just a couple of friends to keep him company. He is mentally alert, emotionally rich, aesthetically sensible and sensitive, and spiritually aspiring. The impression he made on me, when I first met him as a boy at his first exhibition in Bombay, was that of a shy silent sensitive lad with a lot of pent-up energy awaiting release; and when I met him recently, after his return from Europe, he seemed quite a different person, more self-conscious, vital and expressive. He was full of enthusiasm of his visit to Italy, where he spent most of his time, exhibiting in Rome his works for which he went quite prepared, and visiting art galleries, attending operas, meeting artists and discussing art problems.

This visit to Italy, France and England has opened his eyes to the real nature of his own art. He saw in the old masterpieces of Italian art a reflection, paler and poorer but promising reflection, of course, of his own creative efforts. He found something in common with those masters; their vision, their spontaniety of creation, their vigorous forms and their originality of conception and execution. Operas were his early love, and now as a youth he found fresh inspiration in them, for his own paintings revealed something of the dynamic dramatic nature of the operas. He has painted several versions of the operas, full of movement and action. "Lucia di Lammemoor", "Carmen," "Madame Butterfly," "Norma", "Turandot," are some of his best pieces, rich with intense feeling and pulsating colours.

His Indian themes are no less convincing and impressive, "Indian Ballet" is a strikingly powerful composition with full of dramatic effects.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

He has used the stage technique of "levels" to the utmost advantage, and his grouping of the dancing figures is worthy of a born choreographer. There is another version of the same theme with more simple decorative effects but with more animated figures. His landscape studies are veritable moods of nature, quiet and peaceful, stormy and wrathful, rugged and beautiful. His sketches of Indian village scenes, peasants, markets and cattle are delightfully drawn with an eye for impression and not details.

His figure studies too, especially portraits, are attractive, not so much for their finish or truthfulness as for their truthfulness of character study. His colours are at times loud and crude, but the total effect is pleasing. He would make a great hit as a pastelist if he took to that medium. His colours require a little toning down; a little more restraint in his drawings to give his pictures a more aesthetic appeal. As works of art, they are vital, naive, sincere and direct, the qualities of true art. Abhay Khatau is hardly 23 now, and one can confidently expect great things from him in the future.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

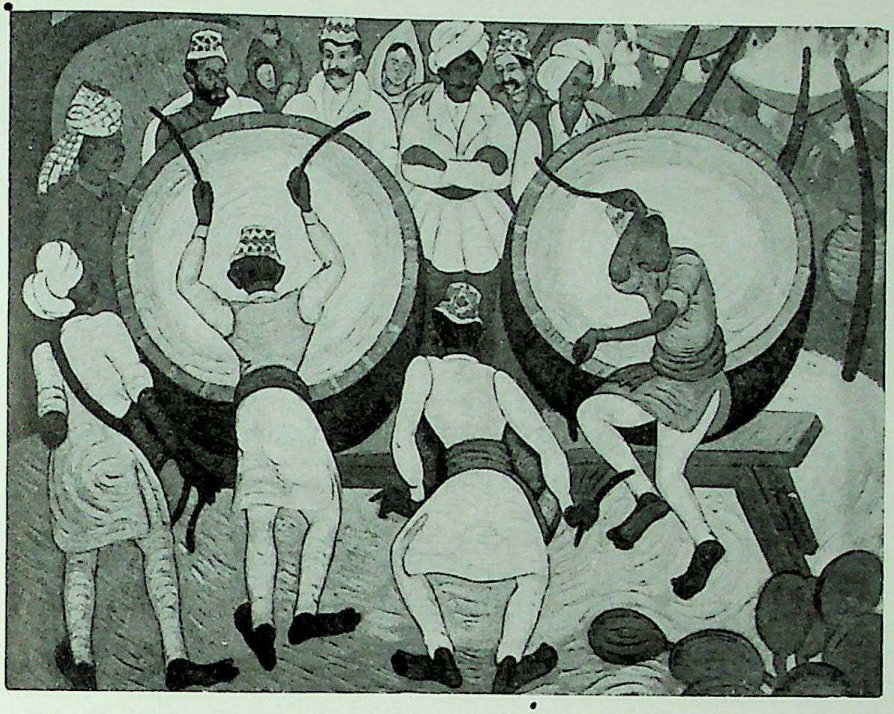
(6)

Prannath Mago

MODERN art, so called, is in many instances neither modern nor art. It is a crazy quilt of many patchy patterns, woven out of the frustrated hopes, suppressed desires, thwarted feelings and the fervid imagination of several generations of art rebels and adventurers. Some of these are great names in the world of art, who gave new visions and created new techniques; but most of the so-called "moderns", especially among the younger set, both in the West and in the East, are merely copyists and fashionmongers. In some cases it is mere psychological exhibitionism rather than any creative imagination or effort.

What modern art stands for, why it is painted or sculptured in the crude and repulsive way in which it is done, and what it is all about many of its most enthusiastic votaries are unable to explain or account for intelligently. Like their art, their minds and hearts are befuddled and confused. The stock answer, like a woman's reasoning, is: "I feel that way, and that is all there is to it." The pity of it is that one should "feel" so queerly and fantastically about beautiful things

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Magō : Drummers

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

in life and nature.

But there are "moderns" who do not go to the extremes about it, but who are sane and normal artists, and not some special kind of perverts. In their art some of the wild dreams and tempestuous techniques of the extremists find an intelligible and rational expression. One such young "modern", among the rising generation of Indian painters, is Prannath Mago.

Mago is the youngest of these "moderns", being 26 years old. He was born in Rawalpindi District, the only son of an advocate, Ram Lal of Gujarkhan. His art education was, however, in Bombay, where he attended the J. J. School of Art for five years.

Gifted with a natural instinct to draw — which alone persuaded his father to send his son to far-off Bombay to study art—young Mago made rapid progress in his studies and soon became a prize-winner. His teachers were proud of him; one of his former art-masters told the present writer that Prannath was so promising that he took him to Kulu and Kashmir for sketching and painting.

Not satisfied with the kind of training he had had in Bombay Mago joined the Mayo School of Art in Lahore to learn the technique of miniature painting, in which he soon attained sufficient proficiency. Later he joined Babhesh Sanyal and worked in his studio, experimenting in mural and other decorative arts.

Such a varied experience and such experiments in different styles were bound to lead him somewhere. They led him to develop a striking style of his own which, he soon found, had much in common with such modern phases of art as Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. He may have consciously sought after them, as best expressing his growing talent; or it may also have been due to the subtle influence of a former Director of the J. J. School of Art in Bombay, Mr. Gerrard, under whom he studied.

There is a lot of loose talk in art criticism about the extraneous influences on young artists who wish to strike a path of their own, or who desire to be creative and original. However great he may be,

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

no artist is so original as to be independent of these influences. All arts are interdependent; and all artists, consciously or unconsciously, influence one another. The criticism that a young painter copies this style or is influenced by that artist and, therefore, cannot by himself be creative or original, is unintelligent criticism.

In Mago's paintings we see such influences most markedly. It does not mean that he has slavishly copied the great masters whom he admires, but only that he is experimenting in those styles and media to discover his own. All art is experimentation, and he is truly a good artist who is both eclectic and traditional. Tradition is a great factor in art—"a revolutionary factor in art", as Roger Fry would put it.

In his ambitious attempts we see this bold experimenting along the lines of some of the greatest of the moderns. For instance, the influence of Von Gogh is obvious in his "Kulu" study, reproduced on the cover page of the Illustrated Weekly sometime ago, even in the technical treatment of the subject. Of course, it would be foolish to compare Mago's amateurish attempts in that style with the finished technique of Von Gogh, but nevertheless the influence is there, and it is all to the good, I submit.

In his "Kite Flying" and "Buffaloes Bathing", also reproduced in the Illustrated Weekly, we see the young painter's gay outlook on life and his virile style as a painter. Only a youthful artist with a zest for life would find inspiration for his art in these every day scenes of village life. The technical treatment of these paintings is excellent and shows how with more practice and experience he might develop into a first-rate painter.

It is a far cry—this strange development of Mago who wanted to be a miniature painter after the traditions of the Mughal and Rajput Schools —from the delicate lines, soft colouring, exquisite finish and lyrical sweetness of those schools to this robust modernism, with its powerful strokes, bold colour designs and rough finish. But artists are that way; they must follow their star and fulfil their own destiny. True artists, I mean, and Mago is a true artist.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Mazumdar : Jamuna

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(7)

Khsiten Mazumdar

ART in India, be it music, architecture, sculpture or painting, has always been the objective expression of the subjective spiritual ideals and aspirations of the people and not the cult of the few. It was never a "passing show" nor vulgar fashion. It was a heritage. Hence the most successful of Indian artists today have been those who were steeped in Indian lore and tradition; who had a working knowledge of the Indian classics; who believed in Indian mythologies and epics and who were traditional in their outlook and behaviour.

Artists like Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, K. Venkatappa, Ahivasi and Raval recognised the necessity, very early in their careers, for a good grounding in their country's classics if they were to be true interpreters of their culture and art. Some of them deliberately chose to live a simple life, to be true to their *dharma*, to be good men first and great artists afterwards. They shunned pelf and publicity and lived laborious days.

To this small band of pioneers belongs Khsitendranath Mazumdar.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh
The most typical painter of the Neo-Bengal School, Khsiten Mazumdar is also one of the most outstanding of them all. Sensitive, intensely emotional and full of aesthetic sensibility, he blossomed into a first rate painter while quite young. In fact, he was one of the "show boys" of the renaissance, whose art was not only much admired and appreciated but was greatly patronised by connoiseurs and critics. He stole a march over, in this respect, some of the more well-known leaders of the new movement.

He suffered from many disadvantages, including stammering. He had not any liberal education nor did he come out of a family living in affluent circumstances. He was shy to an extreme degree and silent as the Sphinx. Work was his hobby, as a student, and he never cared for limelight or for recognition. Often one passed by him in an exhibition hall where his art was the chief topic of praise and adulation, and there he was sitting in a corner lost in a dream-world of his own or working away at a picture for all his worth.

He was deeply religious by temperament; a mystical type like Chaitanya, whose devotee he was and whose life-story he loved to paint in a hundred and one ways. His best masterpieces are the paintings of this saint in strikingly novel and original compositions. He was much under the influence of the cult of Vaishnavism, as expounded by that mystic of Bengal, and he looked a Vaishnava devotee himself, with his emaciated body, far-away look, high-strung emotions and flowing hair.

His studies, in moving rhythmic lines and soft subdued colours, of that one eternal theme of Indian artists throughout the ages, the *ras-leela*, were as refreshingly new as they were aesthetically appealing. Two famous and well-known versions of this made him and his art known throughout India through reproductions in O. C. Gangoly's book on the artist—one of the most artistically produced books on modern Indian painters,—and in my first book on Indian artists published twenty five years ago.

In the first *ras-leela*, every *gopika* in the dancing group has her Krishna by her, all moving in a rhythmic sway round the central "Divine

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Charmer"; in the second, Krishna is "the observed of all observers" and is seen in the centre, surrounded by a garland of *gopis*, entranced and enraptured in the ecstacy of his divine love. Observe the love-lit faces and the rapturous look in the eyes of these "Krishna-mad" girls of Vrindavan, who move in unison with his dancing steps. This painting is now acquired by the Government of India for the proposed National Art Gallery from the Treasuryvala Collection.

In Mazumdar's hands, line-forms and colour textures blend most imperceptably to bring out the subtle aesthetical elements of his picture-poems. For, indeed, he is a poet at heart and a skilled artist of his craft. Like Utamaro's dream-maidens, Mazumdar's heroines and goddesses seem to merge out of an unsubstantial world of subjective reality.

His human figures are exceedingly fascinating, even though they appear to be anaemic and starved, to untrained eyes. In the gentle curve of their drooping heads and in their sinuous rhythmic movements and in the slender, attenuated form of their bodies, you catch a glimpse of something of the "other-worldliness" of his art and its elusive expressiveness. All true beauty is elusive.

His figures are not copied from any living models—for such types live only in the imagination of the artist—but are drawn from the archetypal forms in the artist's mind which have a reality of their own beyond the obvious. Such an art calls for a high quality of poetic and aesthetic ingenuity in the painter.

Mazumdar is one of the few artists who has felt the touch of true inspiration and, therefore, has discovered for himself a new vision of art and a new mode of expression. He is not a copyist and has, therefore, not been led into any sterile paths. He is a creative artist with a vision, will and purpose, and in that sense, stands out as one of the finest painters of the twentieth century renaissance in India.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(8)

Pratima Devi

THE Tagore family is unique in India. Almost all its members are gifted in one way or another. Not only do we find poets and painters, authors and administrators, singers and story-tellers, dreamers and dancers among them, but saints and sages, and even eccentrics. Jorosanko, their home, was an academy by itself.

Men like Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chatterjee, Madhusudan Dutt, Chitranjan Das, Lokamanya Tilak, Ranade and Gokhale were individually great, and perhaps, some near relative of theirs, here and there, was somebody, but as a family they were just above the mediocre.

It is here the uniqueness of the Tagore family lies. For three generations they have been the pioneers and vanguards of Indian cultural life. Maharishi Debendranath Tagore was a towering personality who considerably influenced the life and thought of his time; Dwijendranath Tagore was a saint who, like Francis of Assisi, spoke to animals and birds, and was a living sermon of godliness; Dwarknath Tagore was a prince and philosopher as Surendranath Tagore was an author and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Protima Devi : Compassion (*Prince Sidhartha*)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

administrator, Ganendranath, Gunendranath and Srinath Tagores were pioneers of theatre movements in India; Radhanath and Girindranath Tagores were scholars and lovers of art.

Rabindranath was a world-poet; Abanindranath and Goganendranath Tagores master artists; Dinendranath Tagore, was a great musician; and the younger members of the family like Rathindranath. Nabanendranath and Bratindranath Tagores are all talented artists. The womenfolk of the Tagore family are no less gifted and even girls marrying into this family show genius, and Pratima Devi is one such.

She is the wife of Rathi Babu, Rabindranath's only son. The young Tagore is the General Secretary of Tagore's University at Santiniketan, and an artist himself. Pratima Devi looked after the home comforts of the poet, and was the hostess of his guests.

There was a time when Gurudev Tagore lived as a recluse in a small cottage with a cook, and Mr. C. F. Andrews as his only companion for walks and talks, surrounded by a happy family who lived to serve him in a thousand ways. Pratima was his guardian angel and her adopted daughter, Nandini, the companion of his play and laughter.

The Tagores have been pioneers not only in poetry, painting and dancing but in play-productions and stagecrafts. The poet, of course, was the central figure, the source of inspiration, for the Tagore Players, the author, composer, designer and producer of most of their plays. Dina Babu, Nandalal Bose, Suren Kar and Pratima Devi were the ablest of his collaborators.

Dina Babu was the musical genius behind the shows; Nandalal Bose and Suren Kar attended to the stage-settings and lighting effects, and Pratima was the creator of the colourful costumes and artistic ornaments that added so much to the beauty of their shows. She was the fashioner of the feminine elements in Tagore's plays.

But it is as a painter Pratima is well known to the world. She is, most unquestionably, one of the foremost of woman Indian painters, who has won the appreciation of connoiseurs and critics. She has a commendable mastery over the technique of water colour painting, as the result of the combined influences of Abanindranath Tagore and of the two

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh
Japanese artists who visited India and taught at Tagore's place.

Pratima Devi betrays her family resemblance in some of her ambitious works, the influence of Abanindranath Tagore being obvious. She goes to Ajanta for her inspiration, and the big panels of Buddhist subjects which she exhibited in the Indian Society of Oriental Art. Calcutta, years ago, were distinctly Ajantan in their character. One sees a slight trace of Japanese influence in her technique but that was inevitable as some of these artists learnt at first hand the Japanese technique from the artists of that country who came to teach them.

One of the criticism levelled against the Tagore School of Painting is that its works are very Japanese in their effects and do not show any marked Hindu individuality, like, for instance, the South Indian Bronzes. This criticism is only partially true. The Indian artists of that school go back to the ancient ideals of their art for inspiration but utilize all available technique for their full and free expression.

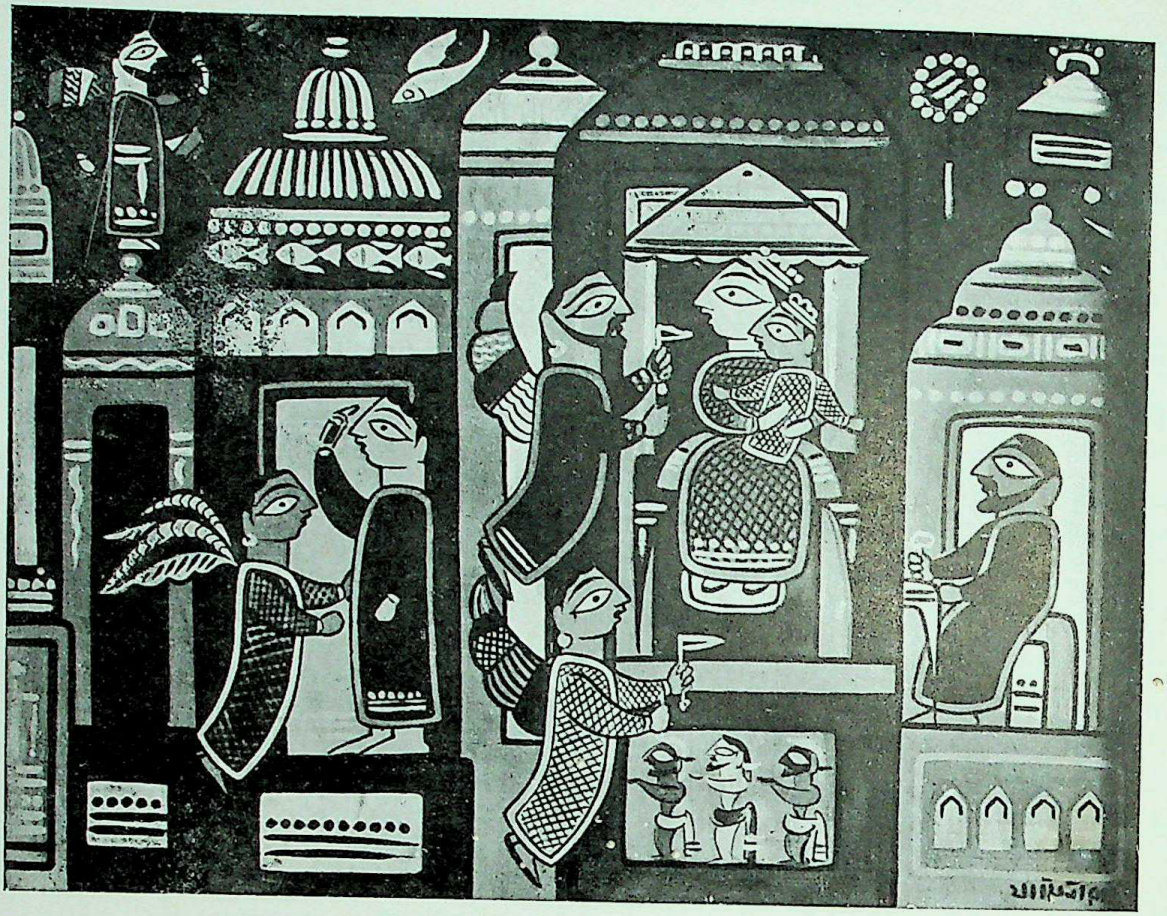
But what is often forgotten in this criticism is that the so-called Japanese influence on modern Indian art is verily the old art of India coming back to its birthplace after enriching itself under the fine aesthetical sensibility of a picturesque and beauty-loving people. The primitive art of Japan can be traced to the art of the Buddhistic era in India, and with the introduction of Buddhism into Japan via China and Korea, the art of India was also ushered in.

Pratima's "Departure of Siddartha" (in the collection of Mr. W. A. deSilva) and "Siddartha and Devadatta" (with Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas of Bombay) are in the best style of this kind. The forms and mannerisms are Ajantan but their technique is Japanese. She has painted several such panels.

One of Pratima's delightful pictures is "Damayanti", (reproduced in the Modern Review) in which she reveals her keen decorative sense. Sukumari Devi, another decorative artist of this school, is more a folk artist, like Sunyani Devi, while Pratima is distinctly sophisticated and intellectual in her decorative works. It is a pity she does not paint any more but even the little she was able to do in her earlier years marks her as a pioneer woman painter of modern India.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Jamini Roy : Madonna and child

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(9)

Jamini Roy

JAMINI ROY! Genius or charlatan? A great painter or a big fraud?

There are as many ardent admirers of his art as there are uncompromising antagonists. Some see in him the only great painter of modern India with daring imagination, refreshing outlook, vivid colour sense and rich technique. Some see in his art only clever mechanical manipulations of worn-out forms and played-out ideas.

Beverly Nichols, after a year's search, acclaimed him as the only artist worth mentioning about in this vast sub-continent. A discerning and well-informed critic, Dr. H. Goetz, thinks that he is one of the two really great painters of modern India.

Whatever others may feel or think about him and his art, there is no gainsaying the fact that he is today a notable art figure not only in this country but in the world. His admirers in other lands are legion.

During the global war he was a much sought-after artist by art lovers from the five continents who came for war work in India. War

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
brought him not only fame but money as well. And his popularity was no myth. Even provincial governors and army generals made pilgrimages to his studio.

A visit to his house, which is also his studio, is an experience. A narrow winding lane in one of the crowded parts of northern Calcutta takes you to a low-roofed, single-storied building, where he usually welcomes the visitors with folded palms at the very entrance itself. A man of few words, he takes one straight to his small sitting room where are to be seen dozens of his latest paintings kept alongside of the walls. The colours in them blaze away and brighten up the room.

A still smaller room next to this is his workshop, where sitting in the traditional style of the Hindu on the floor he paints picture after picture with just a few brushes and pots of colour. The other three or four rooms are filled with his finished works, some of them piled high—a series of unconventional studies in bright flaming colours of Krishna and Radha, of the God-intoxicated Vaishnava Saints, of the crucified Christ and of bold drawings of buxom maidens with tantalising curves and seductive poses. In yet another room a gallery of landscape paintings after the best mannerisms of some of the greatest of the moderns like Gauguin, Von Gogh, Cezanne and others greet the eye.

Before he has finished taking you around his house his paintings overpower you with their colourful variety and unsophisticated beauty of form and design. You realise ere long that you are with a great artist and a powerful personality. Tall, well-built and with strikingly strong features, he impresses you with his sixty and odd years of struggle, suffering, striving and success. His has been an adventurous journey through life.

An academy-trained painter, he started life as a portrait-artist; later came under the influence of the Tagore School, during which period he painted some delightful pictures of pastoral Bengal with its bright-eyed and dark-hued maidens. Not satisfied with this kind of goody-goody art, he turned his attention to the folk painting of Bengal and sought inspiration from the *pat* pictures of Kalighat.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

He soon found that a war-torn, nerve-wrecked and disillusioned world craved for something simple, direct and decent in life and art; and that this old primitive art of his people seemed to satisfy that need. He became the centre of attraction for critics and connoisseurs, and his new-found art built on old tradition and style proved a tremendous success.

He began to paint profusely and reproduced copies of the same pictures, after the tradition of old craftsmen, to meet the increasing and ever-growing demand of the public. Unmindful of the growing jealousy and hostile criticisms of his fellow-artists, he carries on his trade—for it has become a trade with him now—and is making a very good business of his art.

In a recent issue of the Illustrated Weekly of India were reproduced five of his representative works, by no means the best of his style or subject, which created quite considerable interest and controversy. "The Three Drummers" on the cover page, with their rigid poses and amusing profile, revealed him in one of his "modernistic" moods. Young painters in Bengal are trying to evolve a new school out of this style forgetting that this kind of primitive drawing is as old as the hills and humanity.

The yellow cock-eyed rider on a blue leopard with spots, titled "Man On Leopard" is nothing new in the way of a picture, as similar coloured drawings on the walls of old towns could be seen from the Himalaya to Kanyakumari. "The Black Horse" in yellow and red is very reminiscent of painted toys in this country, and the "Deer and Cottage" is suggestive of Walt Disney's "Bamby". These are coloured drawings at their best and their appeal lies in the naive simplicity of the artist's approach to such subjects.

The most typical of Jamini Roy's in this set was "Ganesh and Parvati", with two attendant maids on either side. The colour scheme of yellow, blue, green and red was extremely pleasing to the eyes, however much unconventional the figures with their exaggerated almond-shaped eyes and simplified forms might be. Here again Roy is only following an old tradition and style and not creating any new types as is ordinarily

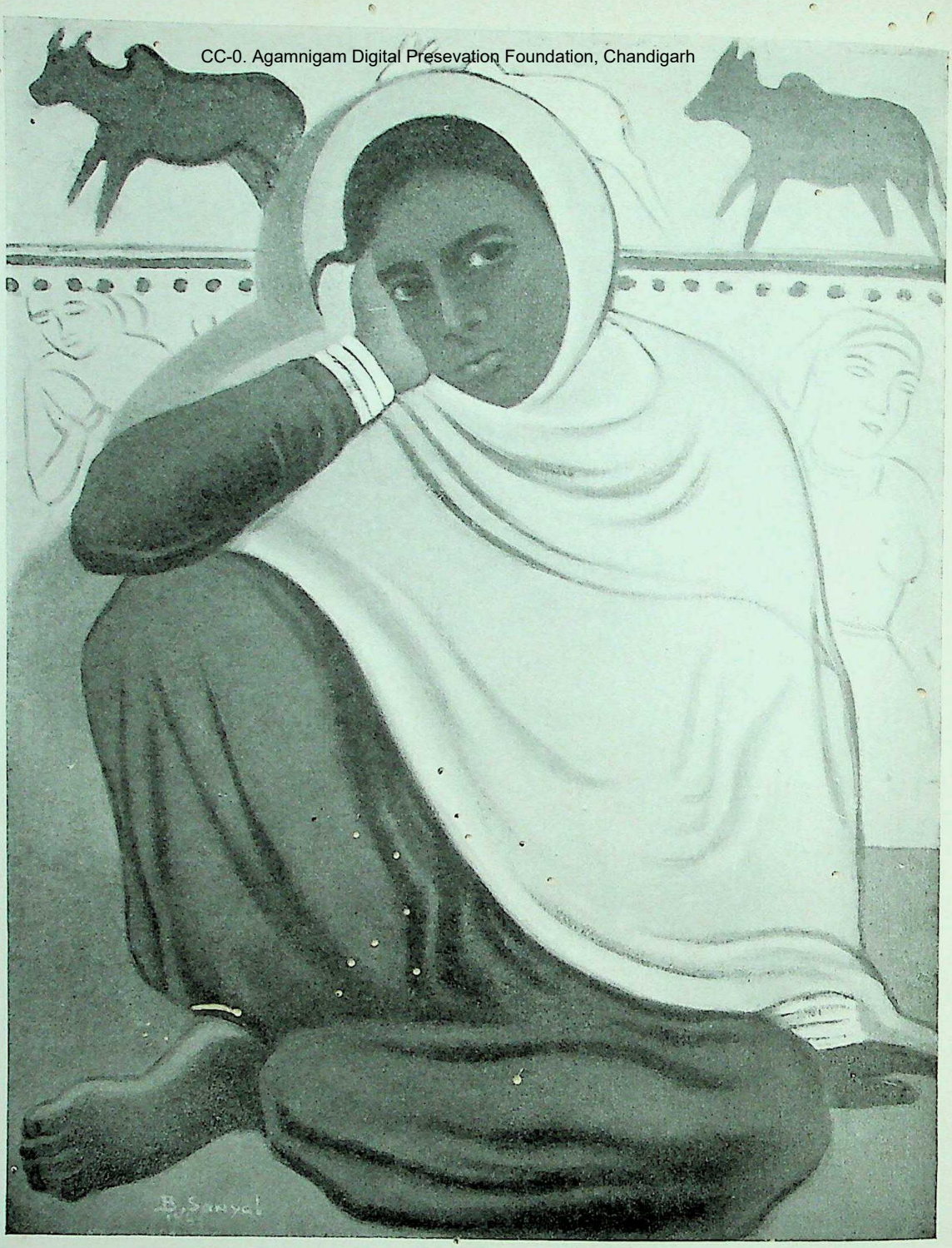
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

imagined.

Primitive art began with pottery and the latest trends in modern art indicate a "throw-back" to that kind of art. Jamini Roy too shows a tendency to this "going-back" to the pottery art. His latest craze is to paint on pots and to see in them his progress and perfection.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Sanyal : Untouchable Girl

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(10)

Bhabesh Sanyal

WHENEVER one thinks of art in the Punjab one usually thinks of Abdur Rahman Chughtai, a painter of great aesthetic sensibility and exquisite craftsmanship. Though the best known of Lahore artists, he is not the only great painter that city has produced. No less gifted and well known is Bhabesh Sanyal, now a refugee artist in Delhi.

As the founder of the Lahore School of Art, and a former Vice-Principal of the Mayo School of Art, Sanyal has been known for over two decades as one of the front rank artists and a first-rate teacher of a generation of young artists.

Born in Lahore, he had his art education in Calcutta, where he spent six years studying painting and sculpture in the Government School of Art under Mr. Percy Brown. He could not have had a better environment or a more ideal teacher. The spirit of Calcutta's social life may be parochial, but in artistic matters the city is most liberal and catholic. There is something in the soil of Bengal which helps the rapid growth and development of aesthetic taste and culture.

As in the case of Hebbar, the Bombay artist, so in Sanyal's, his

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
mother was his first teacher and admirer. He learnt, as a child, the rudiments of moulding and modelling in clay from his mother, who delighted in creating figurines of her household deities for worship. This early love to play with clay led him later on to take to sculpture seriously. In fact, his sculptural works are in no way inferior to his paintings.

As a painter he is one of the foremost among his contemporaries. He paints in oil and in water colour, and is as consumate a portrait painter as he is a landscape artist. A widely travelled man, he has sketched with pen and pencil the teeming life and scenes of this vast country; and in his "Holiday Sketches" we see the lighter side of his nature and the easy manner in which he can handle his brush and colour.

These are by no means serious studies, nor are they representative of his best works. They are just quick sketches done on the spot, as every artist does when he visits beautiful valleys and hills. In his larger canvases and compositions one can see his mastery of drawing and his instinctive colour sense. One of his large paintings, recently exhibited in London at the Royal Academy exhibition of Indian art, was greatly appreciated by the critics there. Some of his best works are to be seen in the Baroda Museum and in private collections.

Good-natured, kind-hearted and easy-going, Sanyal is a very sociable artist. His studio in Lahore used to be the rendezvous of the young progressive writers and poets of the city where, over cups of tea, they talked, discussed and argued about all things under the sun. Sanyal has no airs or poses; he is too simple and human a person to camouflage either his art or mind. He is a frank and a friendly type of man. One of the early promoters of the All-India Art Conference, he has never missed any of its meetings, and is an active member of its executive and regional committees.

Sanyal is one of the few artists in this country who takes an intelligent interest in the welfare and future of Indian artists. A well-read man, a good speaker, he is destined to play an increasingly useful role in the future art development of this country. Happily married to a gifted and charming wife, an artist herself, they both dream of a big and brighter future for Indian Art.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh

Sen : Krishna Leela (*After South Indian Sculpture*)

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(11)

Lalit Mohan Sen

ALL great works of art are a heritage. They have a past, tradition and character. Only the so-called Modern Art seems to be, like a bastard, without a background or parentage; and certainly no future.

These and similar thoughts arise in one's mind as one contemplates the present trends in Indian art and watches the various influences at work in the lives and arts of many of the promising young Indian painters.

In the course of my thirty years' close association with Indian artists I have noticed that such of them that have had a grounding in the style and technique of their own traditional art and are steeped in their own culture find it easier to assimilate cultures other than their own. For how is one, who is devoid of his own culture, capable of appreciating, much less assimilating, other cultures?

A sad feature of our cultural life is the fact that most of the "bright young things", of both sexes, who imagine they are leaders in fashion and art, are for the most part in blissful ignorance of their own culture;

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
and some of them even perfect strangers to their own classics. An art is great only when it has its roots in the past and has a tradition.

Among contemporary Indian painters, who have had their early training in traditional methods and later switched over to the Western and made good with it, Lalit Mohan Sen is one.

L. M. Sen, like most famous painters of modern India, is from Bengal. Born nearly fifty years ago at Santipur, in the district of Nadia, a village noted for its weaving and for its fine white sarees which are worn by the aristocratic ladies of Bengal, he had his early education both in his province and the United Provinces, where he later joined the Government School of Arts and Crafts in Lucknow; and now its Principal.

The U. P. Government was the first to appoint an artist trained by Abanindranath Tagore as the first Indian Principal of a Government art school. Madras followed suit; Lahore, Calcutta and Bombay after. Asit Kumar Haldar become the head of the Lucknow School; Deviprasad Roy Choudhry of the Madras School; Samarendranath Gupta of the Lahore School; Mukul Dey of the Calcutta School.

L. M. Sen was one of the artists selected by the Government of India to do the mural decorations at the India House in London, the others being Ranoda Ukil and Sudanghsu Choudhry. The present writer recalls with joy, the strong fight he had to put up with the authorities then at Delhi for the inclusion of these artists for the India House decoration.

While in Europe he travelled all over the continent, visited art galleries in France and Italy, where he studied the technique of tempera-painting after the old Italian methods. The murals, which Sen and his fellow-artists did at the India House, were more of the Ajantan method, which does not demand wet surface.

During his stay in London he exhibited his paintings at the Royal Academy, some of which were bought by Queen Mary. The press and the critics acclaimed his art with favour. A set of his wood-cuts were acquired by the Victoria Albert Museum; while the Fine Art Society reproduced his pictures for sale throughout the United Kingdom, a fine

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

tribute to his genius.

Though essentially a painter, Sen has specialised in etching and carving on wood and stone. His lino-cuts, four of which the Illustrated Weekly of India published in one of its recent issues, have made his name popular throughout the country by being reproduced in almost all the art journals. While the themes are mostly Indian his treatment of them is Western. There is strength, precision and fine draughtsmanship in them.

Photography is a great hobby with him though he does not favour the idea of using it as an aid to art; and he dislikes painting portraits from photographs. Though photography is not an art there is an art of photography; and painters can contribute a lot to make it more attractive and interesting.

As the Head of the Government School in Lucknow, Sen has preserved the traditions and standards set by his predecessor, Mr. Haldar, whose versatility and broad cultured outlook on life Mr. Sen has imbibed. Some of the very promising artists to come out of this institution are: Somalal Shah, L. Merh, B. N. Jija, P. R. Roy, Ishwardas, Kanu Desai, and they have richly contributed to the art of India.

The paintings of Indian artists usually reproduced are certainly not the best nor typical of their style. Personally I prefer their earlier works in which the Indian feeling is more pronounced. The best works of a good painter invariably either get sold and therefore are not available for the purpose of illustration or the artist does not care to part with them.

The head study of a Pahari girl in pastel, one of Sen's latest, shows not only his sculptural mood but the inherent strength of his art. Though powerfully moulded and boldly designed the face has not lost any of its beauty. It is a different kind of beauty, of course, but it is beauty nevertheless. The Pahari girls of Kulu and Simla valleys have more Aryan type of faces, with chiseled features, while those in the Kumaon and Gharwal hills are Mongolian, like the Gurkhas, and are full blooded creatures. Sen has successfully brought out the

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

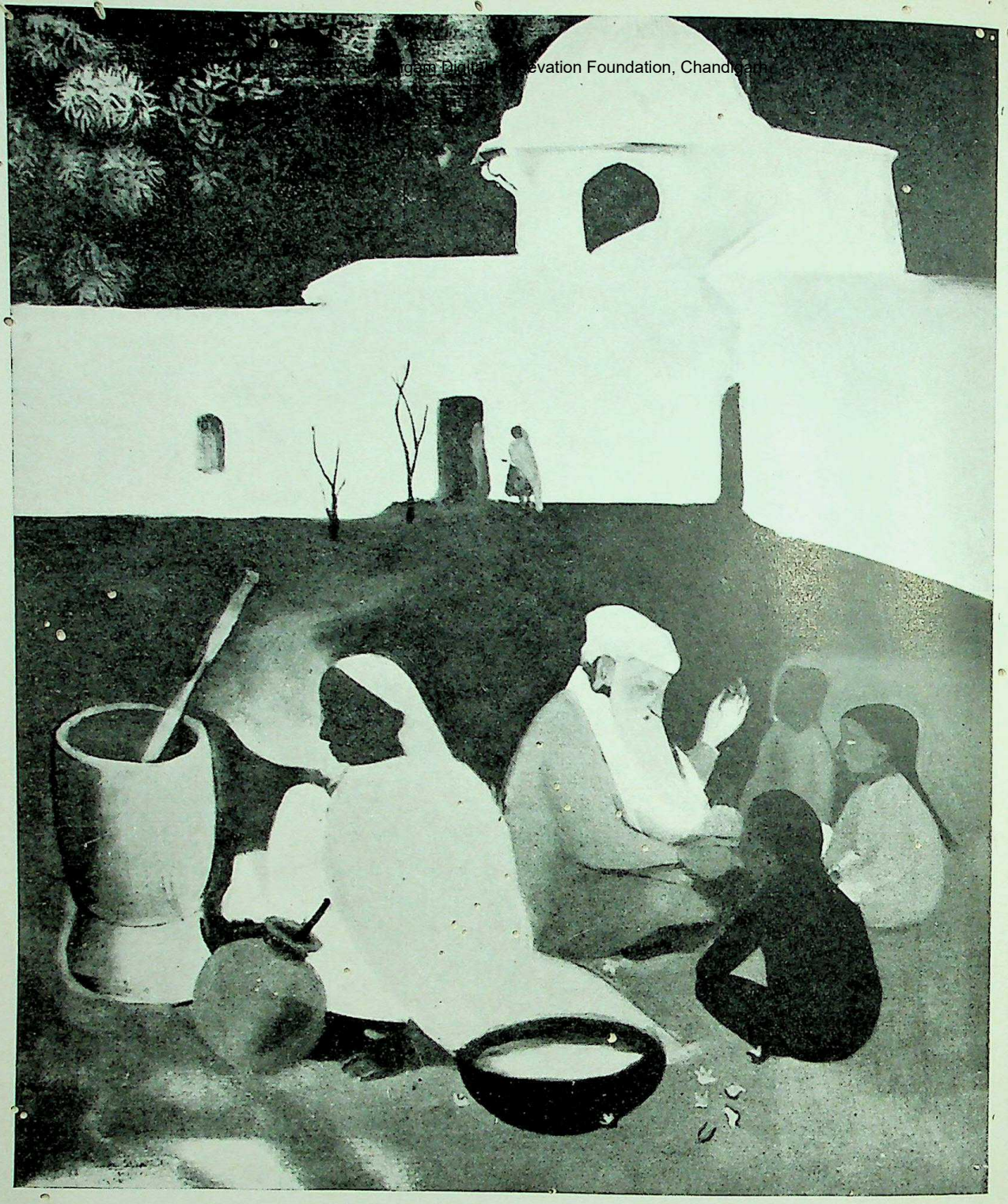
rugged strength and the sensuous character of these hill people on that mask like face.

"The Village Maiden" and "Ananda Paya" (two more of his latest) are in the Western technique, which he learnt when he was a student at the Royal College of Arts in London, and over which he has a commendable mastery. He has used the impressionist's methods of boldly laying contrasting complementary colours in juxtaposition to catch the play of light and shadow. The bright sun-lit scene of a quiet Indian village against which a timid Indian maid is posed contrasts vividly with the subtle shadows of the interior of a Pagan pagoda with the standing figure of Ananda in the background.

It is really difficult to assess the worth of paintings from reproductions; but however poor they may be they are our only means of knowing at present their work unless, of course, one has seen their originals in exhibitions or in the artists' studios. A visit to their studio is always full of surprises, especially in these days when several "isms" in art are striving to find expression in and through them.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Digitized by Chandigarh Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh



Amrita Sher Gil : Story Teller

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(12)

Amrita Sher Gil

SOCIETY the world over—society with a capital S of course,—is cast in the same mould and has certain common characteristics. It is usually silly, superficial, insincere and gossipy. Its silliness is notorious in its sickening sentimentality and stupidity; its superficiality is obvious in its talks and actions; its insincerity is written all over its face, in its professions and poses; and it is the birth-place of private slander and public scandal.

Its first and chief distinguishing feature is, of course, wealth. Brains and morals are the prerogatives of the poor, the privileges of the rabble. Society has money, and it thinks it can buy, sell, bid or command any of these at any time. Why possess them? Brains are a nuisance; they make one think, and thinking is an uncomfortable thing. Morality is often a handicap, if not a disadvantage.

India too has her Society, her Smart Set, her Bright Young Things. It is not confined to the rich but to the middle-class as well. Its caste-mark is exclusiveness; its language is snobbery. It mistakes tomfoolery for

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
life, chatter for wisdom, arrogance for strength and cowardice for humility. Its ambition has no limit and wants not only all the good things of this earth but a little corner in heaven as well.

It is not satisfied with marble mansions and stream-lined cars; it wants also a nodding acquaintance with *fakirs* and *yogis*, hermitages and *ashrams*, politicians and poets. It wants to be everywhere, except in one hot place, and thinks money can get it anything. It gatecrashes everywhere, even into secluded retreats, not in search of knowledge or peace, but *tamasha* hunting. Life, it thinks, is one big *tamasha* which God, the Great Joker above, is indulging here below for its enjoyment. We can see it in Simla and Srinagar, and we can see it in Pondicherry and Tiruvannamalai as well. It also ever hovers about where Presidents and Prime Ministers dwell or visit.

Art, of course, is its pleasantest pastime, main outlet for its bubbling enthusiasm and restless life. It must talk about art, write about art, get up exhibitions, chum up with artists and pretend art-mindedness, right or wrong. If its enthusiasm is genuine and the patronage substantial or even partial, it will not be a bad thing; it may, on the other hand, prove a redeeming feature in an otherwise purposeless parasitical existence. Purposeful or purposeless, it must talk about art and will talk whether one likes it or not.

Poor Jamini Roy is its innocent victim today; it used to be Amrita Sher Gil a few years ago. One heard of "Dear Amrita" in parties, at dinner tables, cosy drawing rooms and even on the sands of Juhu or the slopes of the Himalaya. Many of them had heard the name only; some may have seen her paintings in the original or in reproductions; and only a few knew that she was a woman and an artist. Some thought she was a foreigner; some said she was an Anglo-Indian, and one of them was sure that she was a direct descendant of Sher Shah, the Tiger of Bengal, that one read in history. She was not joking; she was sure!

Amrita Sher Gil was thus, for a time, the rage in the art world of India. She herself created more sensation with her words than with

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

her works. She talked louder than she painted. She wanted to be the artist as critic, with the inevitable consequences. She even broadcast through the courtesy of All-India Radio, a wild tirade against the renaissance in Indian painting. She knew everything about Indian art, its strong and weak points, its mistaken idealism and defective technique, its anaemic character and mean achievement. Ajanta was not bad; the Rajput and Moghul pictures had something; the modern movement as initiated by Havell and Tagore was positively a failure—so she aired her views.

The pity of it was that there was nothing original in what she said. One had heard similar criticisms before for nearly a quarter of a century. In spite of all these adverse opinions, inevitable and even necessary, the renaissance did produce some outstanding painters, who have won world-wide recognition and evoked admiration and appreciation from unprejudiced critics and artists throughout the world.

Amrita Sher Gil was a gifted painter all right, but her opinions on the Tagore School were misplaced and had the same value as the views of some of the Smart Set who knew so little of their heritage; who did not know who Bhishma was, what Gita is; who could not distinguish one Indian tune from another; who had not lived the simple unsophisticated life of Indian homes and who were, for the most part, strangers to the traditions, languages and customs of their own country. You recognised their alien outlook, upbringing and attitude when they opened their mouth to speak, however loud and persistent might be their professions of patriotism and culture. Their walk, their talk, their dress, their life, betrayed them.

So much for Amrita Sher Gil's criticisms. Now for her creations. She was a talented painter and had a robust feeling for form and rich colour sense. Consciously or unconsciously, she had modelled herself on the style of the Neo-Impressionists, especially Gauguin, with whose art she must have been familiar in the galleries of Europe, where she was an art student. Influences of Cezanne and Von Gogh are also there in the attempt to get at "the substance of things" in her paintings.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
She was definitely a Neo-Impressionist painter with Indian scenes and types for her themes. You notice it in the solidity of her forms and figures and in the purity of her colours. The rotundity of her female figures is an echo of Gauguin, and the groupings as well. In fact, Amrita Sher Gil's strong point as a painter is the colour harmony of her pictures. In this she was more European than Indian; and most of her ambitious attempts give that impression. The Indian "feeling" is somehow not there.

Post-Impressionistic art was a kind of sympathetic revolt against the pure Impressionistic School that preceded it. The Impressionists were painters of light, and to paint light they used pure, bright colours. Form as such had no significance for them. It was light in nature that gave definiteness to form, they argued, and in the absence of light forms fade into nothingness. Monet, Manet, Renoir and Degas, all French Masters, were the leaders of this movement.

In the wake of this School came the Post-Impressionists. They were not satisfied with pure colour effects and wanted to introduce solidity and strength coupled with bright and pure colours. Cezanne was the foremost artist in this new movement; Von Gogh and Gauguin being the two other better-known painters of this type. These two art movements in Europe, along with the Cubists, influenced modern painting considerably; though strangely enough, the old folk-artists of India practised these methods for centuries without any elaborate theories about them.

Amrita Sher Gil's earlier and better known paintings, (which are now possessed by the Government of India for the proposed National Gallery) reflect this phase of Post-Impressionistic art, both in the brilliance of their colours and the solidity of their forms. Her female figures are very suggestive of Gauguin's Tahiti women, in their bold contour, rotund form and full-blooded flesh. It was not surprising, therefore, that the delicate dreamy maidens of the Tagore School irritated her. She saw only half-famished, anaemic creatures in them. There was no warmth, passion, sex in them; they seemed so many frozen

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

females from an unsubstantial world. She was not at all wrong; neither was she all right. She had a different outlook and tradition; and her kinship with real India was only skin-deep.

The women of India that she tried to paint were Indian all right with their gold or coffee-coloured complexions and colourful sarees; they were Indian even in their poses. But they somehow seemed Indian women as seen through alien eyes. As paintings they were good and even striking, but you missed in them the native grace and the natural charm of the women of India. The women of Ajanta are by no means tender, delicate, ethereal; on the contrary, in the languorous poses of their bodies, in the coquettish look in their eyes, in their well-developed busts and slender waists and in their enchanting smiles you recognised the passionate women of Kalidasa's plays and of the Gupta age. Nevertheless they are typically Indian.

What gives this Indian character to Indian art is rather difficult to explain in words. It is a matter of feeling,—and all art is more feeling than intellection—association, sentiment, tradition and heritage. This "Indianesque feeling" is not something imagined, some cock-eyed view of a narrow-minded people, some national fetish. It is a reality. Greek art is Greek because of its "Greecian feeling"; and any attempt at rationalising it will make it only modern and not Greek. So it is with Indian art, especially ancient. Tradition is a big factor in art; and art is the most nationalistic thing in life.

The above views do not in any way minimise the excellences in Amrita Sher Gil's art. She was a painter with imagination, skill and power. A fine colourist, her schematic arrangement of bright blues, greens, yellows and reds made her pictures fine studies in colour harmony. She painted rather colours than subjects. One of her delightful studies is the group of Punjabi girls sitting together for a gossip. The colour combination is a sheer delight to the eyes. Another of her big paintings, "A South Indian Family", is a splendid composition. Like Gauguin, she is clever at painting dark and brown figures. Green is another of her favourite colours; "The Elephants at

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
Bath" is a superb work in depicting different shades of green.

The recently published book on her art contains some excellent reproductions in colour of her well-known works, and from these one can have an idea of her style and technique and in what manner she tried to contribute to Indian art. Karl Khandalawala has written an informative sketch of her art and life in that volume. The writer of this sketch had the pleasure of a brief acquaintance with her and of talking with her about art in general and South Indian Bronzes in particular. She had a great admiration for South Indian Temple architecture and spoke enthusiastically about it. She was intelligent, critical and somewhat cynical too. The India of her childhood dreams was the land of romance and chivalry, of brave men and fair women, but the India she saw all about her disillusioned her. She dreamt of a great and glorious India, but cruel death snatched her away even before she could finish dreaming her dreams.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh.

Srimathi: Andal

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(13)

Y. G. Srimati

THE first painter in India, according to old legends, was a woman; she was Chitralekha. No ordinary painter was this woman! She drew the portrait of the dream-lover of her royal mistress merely from a description given to her of the princess' dream. Ancient Indian stories are full of such mythical artists who drew the exact likenesses of persons they had never seen merely from an examination of the texture of a hair from their heads. Legends apart, the old Sanskrit dramas often refer to the art of portrait painting as one of the necessary accomplishments of well-born girls, along with music and dancing.

The Indian girl has a natural gift for freehand drawing even if she does not know the technique of painting as such, for she is taught from childhood to draw geometric and floral designs on floors for festive occasions; and those who have seen these *rangoli* designs in Gujerat or in Bengal will know how dexterous Indian girls are in this folk art and how skilfully they can manipulate their fingers in drawing simple

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
as well as complicated figures which often puzzle trained draughtsmen.

Contemporary Indian Art may not have produced many outstanding women painters but there are some who have richly contributed to it and whose works have been greatly appreciated wherever they have been shown. Sunyani Devi, Pratima Devi, Sukumari Devi, Rani Chanda, all from the Tagore family, are greatly gifted painters, though they do not paint much now. We had that picturesque adventurer on the high seas of Indian art, the late Amrita Sher Gil. Mrs. Guha, Srimati Shanta, Mrs. Rani Krishna, Mrs. Susheela Yawalker, Angela Trindade, Coomi Dallas are some of the promising painters among the rising generation. To this small band of pioneer women painters belongs Kumari Srimati, a gifted girl from Mysore.

Srimati is a traditionalist in her style and goes to Ajanta for inspiration. It is but natural, especially for an amateur artist, to go back to the classical age of Indian painting for inspiration and guidance. Beverly Nichols warned Indian painters against this "gigantic lamp round which Indian artists fluttered like a host of moths" and advised them to free themselves from its baneful influences. It was a false alarm and a futile advice.

The Indian painter can no more evade Ajanta than a Western painter can Greece. It is part of his heritage. To an Indian artist the types and symbols coined by the Ajantan masters are not mere artistic conventions but are the ideals of beauty on which he has been nurtured from childhood. Not only classical poetry but even cradle songs describe these ideal forms of beauty; and how can one escape from such early impressions and influences?

Srimati does not copy Ajantan figures blindly but uses them as decorative *motifs* and abstract symbols in her paintings. The ancient masters chose their ideal forms from all the kingdoms of nature and this gave them their richer artistic anatomy and more intriguing forms to clothe their abstractions; and Srimati finds in such idealised forms her own truer inner expression. We see this only too obviously in her "Sujata", the milk-maid of Urvilla, who fed the famished body of the Lord

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Buddha when He was meditating under the Bodhi tree before His Enlightenment. The "Bullock Cart Journey", another fine attempt of hers, is slightly reminiscent of a similar work by the Gujerat artist, Somalal Shah.

Srimati comes from a cultured Mandayam family of Mysore Ayyangars whose men have the reputation for brains and their women for beauty. Born in Bangalore, she was educated in Madras; and unlike other Indian girls of her class who take to the fine arts as part of their accomplishments, Srimati first learnt dancing, then music and then painting. This is how it should be. A good grounding in classical dancing at an early age gives the young aspirant the rhythmic significance of forms, which alone gives to art, be it painting, sculpture or dancing, its vital character.

The painting, "Andal's Offering" (here reproduced) is a story of a South Indian Saint. She was entrusted the daily task of knitting a flower garland for the deity, Ranganatha. But loving Him, she invariably put it round her own neck before sending it to the temple. A strand of hair, found amidst the flowers gave her away one day. Confronted with it, she remorsefully made a fresh garland. Ranganatha, however, refused it and asked for the very one that had been worn by his devotee. From then on, the flowers adorned Andal daily before being offered to the God, until she herself was one day absorbed into Him.

Vivacious, intelligent, but self-willed and temperamental, Srimati is a born artist. She never attended any art class or was trained by any master. Self-taught and with an innate desire to play with brush and colour, she has to her credit a number of paintings which promise a fine future for her as a painter. No less gifted in the arts of music and dancing, her achievements are quite creditable for a girl who has just finished her teens.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

(14)

A. D. Thomas

A. D. THOMAS is a young Indian Christian of Agra. Of the younger generation of artists who paint in the accepted style, mannerism and technique of oriental art, he is one of the most successful, and already, at a very early age, has established a reputation as a sensitive artist of fine imagination and great originality.

He was, for a time, a student of the Government School of Arts at Lucknow, and studied under two of India's foremost artists, Asit Kumar Haldar and Bireswar Sen. These two were, in their day, students of Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose, and so Thomas is of the third generation of painters belonging to the renaissance started in Bengal nearly four decades ago.

Several names come uppermost to my mind when I think of this younger set, the most oustanding among them being: Mani Bushan Gupta, Debendra Berman, Benoy Mukerjee, Masoji, Manishi Dey, Rani Chanda, Kanu Desai, Somlal Shah, Sri Ram Vish, Ramkinkar Baij, Hariharan, A. K. Roy and last but not the least,

Thomas : Harijan

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

A. D. Thomas.

I am fairly familiar with the works of these artists, and each one of them, I have noticed, has developed or is trying to develop an individuality of his or her own, though the stamp of Santiniketan and the influence of the masters under whom they studied could be seen in the little details and mannerisms that unconsciously creep in even without their knowing.

The art of A. D. Thomas is distinctly original, in many respects, in the subject matter he chooses, the free and unfettered way in which he handles his themes, his delightful decorative and colour sense, his fine sensitive drawing and exquisite finish. Still one can see through them all the strong influence of his teacher Bireswar Sen who, in his turn, betrays his partiality for Edmund Dulac. This is not a weakness in art, especially when one, as Bireswar Sen and Thomas have done, assimilates the best features of a great artist and uses them to the utmost advantage.

There is, for instance, more decorative sense and oriental "feeling" in Thomas's paintings than can be found in the best of Dulac's, dealing with oriental subjects. Dulac had the limitations of his racial genius; he could go only to a certain extent in handling eastern themes and no further. In the case of Thomas, his Indian birth, tradition and upbringing give him the freedom to revel in a world of riotous imagination, intricate patterns and soft subtle colours. Oriental art is essentially a decorative art, and eastern people feel more at home in that style of art.

Dulac, for example, has illustrated the *Omar Khayyam* and the paintings are quite clever and interesting in their own way but they have not the same nearness to truth, feeling and sentiment as the illustrations of the same book by, say, Tagore, Haldar or Chughtai. This is not a criticism of Dulac's art but only a recognition of the limitation of the genius of different artists in regard to certain aspects of art.

A. D. Thomas has struck out a path for himself and has, so far, found no rivals in India, except sincere admirers like Angela Trinidade.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh
Indian artists are by nature and temperament eclectic and generally have no particular religious or creedal bias or prejudice. It is as usual for a Muslim artist like Chughtai to paint Hindu religious themes, like the love of Radha and Krishna or the worship in a Hindu temple with all the devotion and sincerity of a Hindu, as it is common for a Hindu artist like Nandalal Bose to draw ideal portraits of the Buddha, with as much care and affection as a Buddhist, and as it is for a Christian like Thomas to faithfully and reverentially depict the characters of Hindu heroes like Krishna and Arjuna or heroines like Damayanti and Seeta. Artists are not particularly very religious; religious feuds and misunderstandings seldom trouble them, or at any rate, do not much interfere with their efforts and achievements.

Thomas has specialised in recreating the Biblical figures and thus reinterpreting the Great Book in moving lines and glowing tints. In his pictures, these old heroes and heroines of the Hebrews relive in all their grace, beauty and strength. The oriental setting and "atmosphere" are more true to life than in similar works we are accustomed to. Mere long robes and a flowing beard will not make a man look an eastern sage in a picture, or mere draping of loose garments over a feminine shoulder make her appear an eastern woman.

There must be a living grace infused into them by the subtle unconscious creative impulse of the artist, which alone can make pictures "speak", as they say. You find in Thomas's paintings that element, that eastern touch, and that is why his paintings make such a universal appeal and are admired by everybody, irrespective of faith, caste or colour. Even the Pope, it was said, admired his pictorial presentation of the Prophets, and it is quite usual to see his Christ paintings adorning the walls of orthodox Hindu homes.

His studies of the Christ are a unique contribution to art. Great European masters have attempted to portray the Man of Sorrows as a divine being, a world saviour, a great humanist, as a child, and some of them have given remarkable masterpieces of painting of this great Teacher. Thomas's paintings of the Christ as Child, Man and

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

Divine Man are no less valuable and are unique in their true oriental colouring and sentiment.

The stately figure of Jesus, the compassionate expression on the face, the simple loose garment that clothes his body, all these are treated in an idealistic manner in the usual Indian style and are highly suggestive of the spiritual nature of the theme. There is no attempt at the dramatisation of the figure, no saintly pose, no emphasis on martyrdom. Just a lovable human person who has flowered into divinity, "man raised to Godhead."

Thomas is widely travelled and has executed large wall paintings in the cathedrals in Italy; his personal contact with the glorious Medieval art in Europe and his close association with the living artists in Florence have enriched his knowledge and experience; and thus enriched, he stands out as one of the front rank painters of modern India, though now an exile in England.

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh